THE GREAT DUTY OF Resignation TO THE DIVINE WILL IN Afflictions,

Enforced from the Example of our Suffering SAVIOUR.

By WILLIAM BATES, D.D.

The Second Edition.

LONDON:
Printed by *R. R.* for Brabazon Aylmer, at the *Three Pigeons* against the *Royal-Exchange* in *Cornhill.* MDCXCVIII.

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THE PREFACE.

THE *First Man by Rebellion againſt his Maker, loſt his Innocence and Felicity, and conveyed a ſad Inheritance of Sin and Miſery to his Univerſal Progeny: Ever ſince, it has been eſteemed a principal part of Wiſdom to prepare the Minds of Men to encounter with innumerable Evils that ſurround them, and to preſerve a well-order'd contented ſtate of Soul, when actually under the greateſt Afflictions. All the famous* Sophies *of the World, the moſt celebrated Profeſſors of Patience, could not attain to this Skill. Their conſolatory Diſcourſes compoſed with*

Wit and Eloquence, are like artificial Fruits of Wax, that ſeem to ſurpaſs the productions of Nature, but can only pleaſe the ſight, and afford no real refreſhment to the taſte. Or, like Rings of Steel that are joined by the attractive virtue of the Loadſtone, that make a Chain fair to the Eye, but of nò ſtrength and uſe. It was inexcuſable Ignorance, their not reſolving Temporal Evils to their proper Original, the righteous Providence of God. They erected a blind and fooliſh Power under the title of Fortune, to preſide in this Sphere of mutability: They always boaſt of their playing a Prize with Fortune, and triumph over a Phantome of their own Fiction. This Conceit was both impious and uncomfortable; impious, to take the Scepter of Government from God's hand, and attribute to the fooliſh Pleaſure of Fortune, what is ordered by

Plin. l. 2. c. 7.

Sed tantum cum fortuna ſe digladiari momentis omnibus gloriantur. Lact. *lib. 3.*

by his Providence: And uncomfortable, for they fancied their Deity to be blind, without diſcerning between the worthy and unworthy, and inexorable to the complaints of the injured, and the Prayers of the miſerable. The common Topicks from whence they hardened themſelves are, That none are exempted in this open ſtate from Afflicting accidents, the common tribute of Mankind: That 'tis in vain to ſtruggle with what is irreſiſtible: That Death is the balm and cloſe of all Evils. And the beſt of their moral Arguments for Patience under Sufferings, ſuch as the dignity of the reaſonable Soul; and that nothing inferior to it ſhould have power, or is worthy to put it into confuſion; That Virtue is the nobleſt Perfection, and is increas'd by the moſt difficult Exer-

ciſe; That 'tis best to yield up our ſelves to the Divine diſpoſal. Theſe Arguments are with infinite more advantage propounded in the Sacred Scriptures: And for Chriſtians to attend to the inſtructions of natural Reaſon, and neglect the Divine Revelations of the Goſpel, is a folly like that of the ſilly Indians *of* Mexico, *who having plenty of Wax, the natural Work of the Bees, yet made uſe of Firebrands to light them in the Night, that afforded a little Light mix'd with a great deal of Smoak. Briefly, They had but wavering conjectures of the future State, and the Recompences thereof; from whence are derived the moſt powerful Motives of Active and Paſſive Obedience to the commanding and diſpoſing Will of God: But in the Scripture are laid down in the cleareſt manner,*

and

and with infallible aſſurance, ſuch Principles as are effectual to compoſe the Mind to patient Suffering, and to meet with valiant Reſolution all the terrible contrarieties in the way to Heaven. It declares, That Sin opened an entrance unto all the current adverſities in the World, which are the evident ſigns of God's diſpleaſure againſt it. In anguiſh we are apt to diſpute with Providence, and an imagination of Innocence kindles Diſcontent: Of this impatience, ſome even of the beſt Moral Heathens were guilty; Titus *and* Germanicus *charged the Gods with their untimely, and in their apprehenſion undeſerved Deaths; but the due ſenſe of Sin will humble and quiet the Mind under Sufferings; it directs us to conſecrate our Sorrows, to turn the flowing Stream into the Channel of Repentance.*

And

And thus the Paſſion of Grief, which, if terminated on external Troubles, is barren and unprofitable, it can neither retrieve our loſt Comforts, nor remove any oppreſſing Evil; if it be imployed for our Offences, prepares us for Divine Mercy, and is infinitely beneficial to us. And thus by curing the Cauſe of Afflictions, our Guilt that deſerves them, we take away the malignity and poiſon of them. The Word of God aſſures us, that all the perturbations and diſcords in the paſſages of our Lives are ordered by his Wiſdom and Will, ſo that without extinguiſhing the two eyes of Reaſon and Faith, we muſt acknowledge his Providence, and obſerve his deſign in all, which is either to excite us when guilty of a careleſs neglect, or remiſs performance of our Duty, or to reclaim

us

us from our excurſions and deviations from the narrow way that leads to Life. Indeed there is nothing more common nor more fatal, than for afflicted Perſons to ſeek by carnal diverſions and contemptible comforts, to overcome their Melancholy, and the ſenſe of Divine Judgments; and hereby they add new Guilt, and provoke new diſpleaſures. This preſages and accelerates final Ruin; for ſuch whom Afflictions do not reform, are left as incorrigible. Iſa. 22. 12, 13, 14.

But above all encouragenents, the Goſpel ſets before us the Sufferings of our Redeemer, and directs all his Diſciples in ſincerity to accuſtom themſelves to the contemplation and expectation of Troubles on Earth: It tells them 'tis a branch of their Religion, to Suffer with him that they may Reign with him.

him. *And what is more reaſonable, than if our Saviour endured ſuperlative Sufferings to purchaſe Eternal Glory for us, that we ſhould with the ſame Mind bear lighter Afflictions to prepare us for it? If this Principle be alive and active in our Breaſts, That our preſent Afflictions ſhall determine in our future Happineſs, when Time ſhall ceaſe and Eternity ſucceed; this will encourage us to ſerve God with our beſt affections when our days are overcaſt with Sorrow, as in a bright Proſperity: This will ſecure our Paſſage through a ſtormy tempeſtuous World, as if it were a truly Pacifick Sea, knowing that Divine Providence always guides us to the Port of eternal Tranquility. This is the ſubſtance of what is amplified in the following Treatiſe. And whilſt there are Miſeries in the*

the World, no Diſcourſes are more ſeaſonable and uſeful than thoſe that lighten our oppreſſing Sorrows, and that enable us with uniformity and conſtancy in all the changes of this mortal Life, to purſue our eminent End. The Holy Spirit, the great Comforter, apply theſe Truths to the Hearts of the Afflicted.

William Bates.

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THE GREAT DUTY OF Resignation.

MATTH. XXVI. 39.

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.

THE Words are our Saviour's Prayer at his private Passion in the Garden. In Paradise was the first Scene of *Man's* Sin, and in a Garden the first Scene of *Christ's Sorrows.*

He

He was now in the near view of his extream Sufferings; the fatal hour approach'd when he was to die with all the concurrent Circumstances of Shame and Cruelty. His Nature was Human and Holy, and therefore apprehensive of Misery and the Wrath of God. In this Exigency, *He fell on his Face*, a Posture of humble Reverence, and with earnestness prayed, saying, *O my Father*, an Expression of his stedfast Trust in the Love of God: *If it be possible*, not with respect to his Absolute Power, for by that he could easily have preserved him; but with respect to his Sovereign Pleasure, and Eternal Decree: *Let this Cup pass from me*; that implies a compleat Deliverance from the Rage of the Powers of Darkness, and of the perverted World in conjunction with them. He suffered innocent Nature to act as Nature, for he submitted to our Infirmities, but without our Imperfections. *Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*: His Petition was qualified with an Act of Submission; the desire of his Nature, that recoil'd from such Sufferings, was over-ruled by the resignation of

Grace.

Grace. There was no repugnancy, but a ſubordination, between the Senſitive Will and the Rational Will, directed by his Mind, that foreſaw the bleſſed Effects of his Sufferings, *the Glory of God*, with the *Salvation of loſt Mankind*. And that juſt Horror, with the ſtrong Averſion of his Nature from ſuch a terrible Death, renders his willingneſs more conſpicuous and meritorious. As *Man*, the apprehenſion of it put him into an *Agony*; but as *Mediator*, by a firm Reſolution and clear Choice he ſubmitted to it.

Now the Example of our ſuffering Saviour lays an Obligation on us to tranſcribe his Copy; his Titles in Scripture declare both his *Eminency* and *Exemplarineſs*. He is our *Head*, and our *Leader*, the *Captain* of our Salvation, whom we are bound to follow in taking up our Croſs: His Sufferings were deſigned not only for our Redemption, but for our Inſtruction and Imitation. What he commands as God, he perform'd as Man, that we might voluntarily yield up our ſelves to the Holineſs and Equity of his Law. Thus from the Pattern of our Saviour's De-

portment, the Point of Doctrine is this:

The entire Reſignation of our Wills to the diſpoſing Will of God, is the indiſpenſible Duty of Chriſtians under the ſharpeſt Afflictions.

In the Explication and Proof of this Point, I ſhall

I. Conſider what is conſiſtent with this *Reſignation.*

II. What is implied in it.

III. The Reaſons to convince us of this Duty of *reſigning* of our ſelves, and all our Intereſts to God: And then apply it.

I. I will, Firſt, Conſider what is conſiſtent with this *voluntary Reſignation.* That will appear in the following Particulars.

1. Firſt, An earneſt Deprecation of an impending Judgment, is reconcilable with our Submiſſion to the Pleaſure of God,

God, declared by the Event. Our Saviour with Humility and Importunity deſired the removing of the Cup of Bitterneſs. We muſt diſtinguiſh between God's Law, and his Decree and Counſel: The Law is the Rule of our Duty, and requires an entire exact ſubjection in all our Faculties, even in our internal Deſires, in the firſt motions of the Will: The leaſt velleity, or riſing of the Heart againſt the Divine Command, is irregular and culpable; for not only the Acts of Sin are forbidden in every Command reſpectively, but all the Incitations of Concupiſcence, before the deliberate Judgment of the Mind, or the actual Conſent of the Will. But the Decree of God is not the Rule of our Duty; and ſecret, till manifeſted by the Event of Things. This being premiſed, the Reaſons are evident why we may pray againſt an Affliction that threatens us, without violating our Duty.

Firſt; Becauſe Afflictions are Evils which the Will naturally declines, and are not deſirable things in themſelves. They are not beneficial and productive

of our good by any proper Efficacy and Operation, but by the over-ruling Providence of God, and the gracious Assistance of his Spirit. When *Aaron*'s Rod was put into the Sanctuary, and became green and flourishing with Blossoms and Almonds, 'twas not from any inherent Virtue of its own, but from the special Influence of the Divine Power; for the other Rods remained dead and dry: Thus the happy Effects of the afflicting Rod are from Divine Grace.

Secondly; There are proper Temptations that attend the afflicted state. Many are encompass'd in a sad Circle; their Sins procure Afflictions, and their Afflictions occasion many Sins Indeed, *Tribulation* that is sanctified, by a happy gradation *worketh Patience*; and *Patience*, *Experience* of the Divine Mercy; and *Experience*, *Hope*; and *Hope maketh not ashamed*. But when it meets with a stubborn Spirit, there are fearful descents of Sin: *Tribulation* excites *Impatience*, and *Impatience* causeth *Perplexity*, and that *Despair*, and *Despair*, *Confusion*. The Devil lays his Trains in every Condition, and some-

Rom. 5. 3, 4, 5.

ſometimes by immoderate Sorrow, ſometimes by inordinate Joy, doth miſchief to the Soul. And as more periſh by Surfeits than Abſtinence, yet the Diſeaſes that are cauſed by Emptineſs, are more dangerous and incurable than thoſe that proceed from Fulneſs: So more are ruined by *Proſperity* than *Adverſity:* But the guilty Paſſions that ferment and rage in Adverſity, are more pernicious, and more hardly temper'd and ſubdued, than the Luxurious Appetites that are fomented and drawn forth by Proſperity. We are directed by our Saviour to pray, that we may *not be led into Temptation, and to be delivered from all Evil.*

Secondly; A mournful ſenſe of Afflictions ſent from God, is conſiſtent with a dutiful Reſignation of our ſelves to his Will. 'Twas the vain Boaſt of the Philoſophers, That their Inſtructions would fortify Men with ſuch magnanimous Principles, and generous Spirits, as with an equal calm Tranquility of Mind to encounter all the fierce and ſorrowful Accidents to which they might be expoſed here: They ſpeak high againſt Fortune and Fate, and re- 2.

ſolve ſtubbornly, that no miſery, whether Poverty or Diſgrace, Torments or Death, ſhould extort from them a confeſſion that it was Miſery. 'Twas one of their Actioms, That a Wiſe Man is not ſubject to the viciſſitudes and inſtability of things here below; That he ſuffers no conflict of contrary Paſſions in his Breaſt; That he is always above in the * Serene, where no Tempeſts can diſturb, no Eclipſe can darken his Mind: But theſe proud pretenſions were empty of reality. Indeed ſuch a perfect exemption from all afflicting Paſſions, is neither poſſible nor regular in our preſent ſtate: Not poſſible, for the beſt Men are not all Spirit, but united to Fleſh; and when the Body is under ſtrong pains, the Soul ſuffers in its ſufferings; and while we are thus compounded, the loſs of thoſe Comforts that ſupport and ſweeten the preſent Life, muſt cauſe Grief. 'Tis eaſy to utter brave Expreſſions, and lay down ſevere Precepts in contempt of Evils † when they are at a diſtance, but hard to ſuſtain the Spirit under the

Nihil agis dolor, quamvis ſis moleſtus, nunquam te eſſe confitebor malum. Poſſidomus.

* *Talis eſt ſapientis animus qualis Mundi ſtatus ſuper lunam, ſemper illic ſerenum.* Seneca.

† *Magna verba excidunt, illi dicere, cum Mors proprius acceſſit, cum tortor manum popoſcit, poſſis facile provocabas mala abſentia.* Seneca.

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the actual feeling of them; 'tis one thing to diſcourſe of a Battel, and another to be engaged in the heat of it. But ſuppoſing by a Philoſophical Charm the Heart were ſo hardned as to be proof againſt the moſt piercing Afflictions, ſuch a forced inſenſibility is not regular, but proceeds from the extinction of Humanity and Piety; and that will appear by conſidering Afflictions in a natural or moral reſpect.

First, in a natural reſpect, for ſo they are deſtructive or oppreſſive Evils, and a penſive feeling of them is ſuitable to the Law of our Creation: for the Humane Nature is fram'd with ſuch Senſes and Paſſions, as according to God's intention ſhould be affected ſuitably to the Quality of their objects; and if the Soul acts rationally, 'tis moved accordingly. A Saint on Earth is not a Saint in Heaven, raiſed above all Diſaſters and Troubles, freed from all hurtful impreſſions from without, and ſorrowful impreſſions within, but is liable to afflicting evils: And it is becoming his Duty to have his paſſions pliable to his condition, but without exceſs; the Eyes muſt not be drown'd, nor dry, but tenderly affected. 1.

2. Secondly; Considered in a moral respect, as they are sent from the high and just Providence of God, it is absolutely necessary there should be an humble resentment of his Displeasure. This is a consequent of the former; for if our affections are seared up, that we do not feel the stroke, how shall we regard the hand that smites us? If we are not sensible of Afflictions, we are secure in our Sins. Natural Sorrow is introductive of Godly Sorrow. There are two extreams to be avoided by the afflicted, according to the direction of *Solomon* in the person of Wisdom, and repeated by the Apostle: Heb. 12. 5. *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.* Some are discouraged and over-born by Afflictions as insupportable: others are stubborn and careless, and never lay them to heart: they never look upward to the original efficient Cause, an Offended God, nor inward to the impulsive deserving Cause, their Sins; but esteem them fortuitous Events that happen in this mutable state, without a design to correct and reform Sinners; or to proceed

ceed from a blind neceſſity, things of courſe; or meerly regard the ſecond Cauſes and Inſtruments of their troubles: accordingly, when they meet with Calamities, all their care is by a preverſe ſhift to ſeek for relief only in Temporal Comforts; without ſerious applying themſelves to God, whoſe end in ſending Troubles, is to reclaim us from Sin to Holineſs, from Earth to Heaven, from the Creatures to himſelf.

This ſecret Atheiſm, like a benumming *Opium*, ſtupifies the Conſcience; and the inſenſibility of God's hand inflicting Evils, is as different from Chriſtian Patience and Conſtancy, as a mortal Lethargy is from the quiet, ſoft Sleep of Health: Nothing kindles his Anger more than neglecting it; 'tis equally provoking with the deſpiſing of his Love: It is a ſymptom of a wretched ſtate of Soul; if there proceed no ſighs and groans, no ſigns of grief from the ſenſe of God's diſpleaſure, it is a ſad evidence there is no Spiritual Life. Indolence under the effects of God's Anger, is like the ſtillneſs of the dead Sea, whoſe Calm is

is a Curſe. The *Jews*, tho intitled the People of God, are deeply charg'd for this prodigious Madneſs; *O Lord, thou haſt ſtruck them, but they have not grieved; thou haſt conſumed them, but they refuſed to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refuſed to return*, Jer. 5. 3. We have whole Quarries of ſuch obdurate Wretches amongſt us; this impenitent diſregard of God's hand is a dreadful preſage of future and more heavy Judgments. *Who ever hardned himſelf againſt the Lord, and proſpered? Do we provoke the Lord to jealouſy? are we ſtronger than he?* The moſt refractory he can compel to acknowledg with bitter lamentations his Wickedneſs and Weakneſs, how unable he is to contend with his Judge. But ſuppoſing a reſpite from puniſhment here, there is an Hell prepared for ſtubborn Sinners, where is Weeping and Wailing for ever. Whom the Rods do not awaken, the Scorpions ſhall.

Secondly; I ſhall now proceed to explicate what is included in the reſignment of our ſelves to God in times of Affliction. This will be made evident by

by conſidering the leading powers and faculties which Grace ſanctifies and works in, according to their natural ſubordination.

The Underſtanding approves the ſe- 1.
vereſt diſpenſations of Providence to be good, that is for reaſons, though ſometimes unſearchable, yet always righteous, and for gracious ends to the Saints. When *Hezekiah* heard the heavy Prophecy, that all his Treaſures ſhould be carried to *Babylon*, and his Royal Progeny ſhould become Slaves there, he ſaid to *Iſaiah*, *Good is the word of the Lord which thou haſt ſpoken.* Iſa. 39. 6, 7, 8. His ſanctified Mind acknowledged it to be a juſt Correction of his vain Pride, and quietly ſubmitted to it: And as there is a ſatisfaction of Mind in the rectitude, ſo in the graciouſneſs of his Proceedings. The miſapprehenſion and miſ-belief of Gods deſign in afflicting, cauſeth Impatience and Murmuring; but when the Mind is convinced, that he Afflicts us for our Benefit, that Bodily Diſeaſes are Medicinal Advantages, the remedies of the Soul; that the loſſes of Earthly Comforts prepare us for Divine Enjoyments; that the way which

which is ſowed with Thorns, and watered with Tears, leads to Heaven; the Heart is compliant with the ſharpeſt methods of Providence. But theſe things will be more fully opened under theſeveral heads of Arguments to enforce the Duty.

2. This Reſignment principally conſiſts in the conſent and ſubjection of the will to the Orders of Heaven. The Will is an imperious Faculty, naturally impatient of oppoſition to its Deſires, and we pay the higheſt honour to God in the loweſt ſubmiſſion of our Wills to his Appointments. 'Tis true the Will cannot make a direct choice of Evil, nor love Afflictions, but the Holy Spirit by a powerful Operation ſo diſpoſeth it, as to renounce its own inclinations when diſcordant with the Will of God. And the more humble, ready and entire the Submiſſion is, the more difficult and harſh the denial of our natural deſire is, the more ſupernatural Grace ſhines and is acceptable. It is the perfection of Holineſs to do what God loves, and to love what God does. There is a rare example of this in *David*'s Carriage, when under his

his greateſt Affliction : 'twas in his flight from his Son *Abſalom*, who endeavoured to deprive him of his Kingdom and Life. *And the king ſaid unto Zadock the prieſt, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I ſhall find favour in his eyes, he will bring me again, and ſhew me both it and his habitation; but if he ſhall ſay, I have no delight in thee, behold, here I am, let him do to me as ſeems good unto him.* O happy frame! his Spirit was ſo equally ballanced, That if God would ſuffer a Rebel that violated the moſt tender and ſtrict relations of a Son and Subject to a Gracious Father and Sovereign, the Murtherer of his Brother, and a Parricide in his deſires, to uſurp his Throne, he humbly ſubmitted to it. 2 Sam. 15. 25.

3. The Duty of Reſignation conſiſts in the compoſure of the Affections to a juſt meaſure and temper, when under the ſharpeſt Diſcipline. Of the Paſſions, ſome are tender and melting, others are fierce and ſtormy, and if a ponderous oppreſſing Evil happen, or the loſs of that good that was very pleaſing, they ſometimes join together, as the Clouds at the ſame time diſſolve in Showers,

Showers, and break forth in Thunder and Lightning. Now when ſanctified Reaſon hath a due Empire over them, and the Soul poſſeſſeth it ſelf in Patience, it is a happy effect of Reſignation to the Divine diſpoſal. Of this we have an eminent inſtance in the afflicted Saint forementioned. When *David* was ſo wickedly reproached by *Shimei*, and *Abiſhai* fired with Indignation, would preſently have taken exemplary revenge, by ſtopping his Breath for ever: *Should this dead dog curſe my Lord the King? Let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head.* How cool and calm was *David*'s Spirit? he felt no æſtuations nor tumults within, expreſt no outragious complaints, but ſaid, *Let him curſe, becauſe the Lord hath ſaid to him, Curſe David.* There is a twofold exceſs of the Sorrowful Affections in Troubles:

2 Sam. 16. 9, 10.

I. In the degrees of them.
II. In the continuance.

Firſt; In the degrees of them, when they exceed their cauſes. Afflictive things that deeply wound us, are uſu-

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ally repreſented by the reflection of Sorrow, with all the heightning Circumſtances, the Loſs as unvaluable, the Evil as intolerable. As objects appear greater than their true proportion, when ſeen through a Miſt; ſo do Evils, apprehended through Grief: and after ſuch a falſe judgment the Paſſions take their violent courſe, and the Spirit ſinks under overwhelming heavineſs. The Soul is diſabled from performing what belongs to it, with reſpect to the general and particular Calling, and cannot with freedom wait upon God, but neglects its duty and felicity. 'Twas the complaint of the afflicted Poet,

Hei mihi quod miſeros prudentia prima relinquit.

The firſt effect of miſery is black confuſion in the thoughts, that the Mind doth not diſtinctly conſider and apply ſuch things as would be effectual to mitigate, or remove it. Beſides, as when the Stream overflows the channel, it runs foul and turbid: ſo immoderate Sorrow often cauſeth ſecret Diſcontent and Anger at the Almighty, diſquieting

ting and tormenting riſings of heart againſt his Providence. All Things are diſordered and turbulent in the little and marvellous Monarchy of the Soul. And ſuch ſeeds of incitation are in our corrupt Nature, that in the extremity of Anguiſh, the furious Paſſions ſwell into a Storm, and break the reſtraints of reaſon and Grace. *Job* in a hot fit expoſtulates ſtrangely with God, *Is it good unto thee that thou ſhouldeſt oppreſs?* He was a Holy Man, and a Prophet, who in the Paroxiſm of his Paſſion, *curſt the day of his birth.*

Job 10. 3.

Jer. 20. 14.

Secondly; There is an exceſs in the continuance.

Deep Grief doth more arreſt the Thoughts upon its object, than the affection of Joy doth. The Mind is not ſo eaſily diverted from what afflicts, as from what delights. The main ſtrain of the Soul is towards the mournful Object; and in the midſt of Comforts to ſupport the fainting Spirits, there ſtill remains a ſad remembrance of that which torments: a ſwarm of ſtinging thoughts continually wound and inflame the Breaſt: no Counſels prevail, but the Soul is reſolved in its grief,

grief, and always reſtleſs with a bitter deſire of what is irrecoverable. Thus the Prophet deſcribes the miſery of *Rachel, weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, becauſe they were not.* As ſome Venomous Creatures turn all that they eat into Poiſon; ſo obſtinate Sorrow takes occaſion from every thing to encreaſe it ſelf. This conſumes the ſtrength, and the Mourner lives only to feel his Miſery, and thinks Death too ſlow for him, that was ſo precipitate for the perſon lamented. Thus by the fixed Contemplation of its Trouble, the Soul is diſtracted from its heavenly Original, and from purſuing its bleſſed end, and indulgeth its Sorrow, as if the loſs of a Temporal Comfort were utterly undoing to it. Jer. 31. 15.

This obſtinate grief is inconſiſtent with a reſigned frame of Spirit. Though in great Afflictions, there will be a conflict of Nature, and it is Wiſdom to let Grief breathe forth, and have a paſſage, yet Grace will aſſwage the Fury, and limit the time, by regarding the Will of God, and by deriving from the Springs of Comfort above,

ſome inward refreſhings, when the Streams below totally fail.

I ſhall now propound the Arguments that will clearly convince us of this Duty of Reſignation; ſome of which are powerful to ſilence all rebellious Arguings, and ſuppreſs all the tranſports of the Paſſions; others to raiſe the drooping Spirits, and incline the Heart to a calm yielding, and compleat ſubjection to the Divine Will.

The firſt Argument ariſeth from God's Original Supream Right in our Perſons, and all things we enjoy. He is the Fountain of Being, and produced us out of the depth of our native nothing, and made us little lower than the Angles. He is the Author of all our Good, the juſt and true Proprietor of all his Benefits. From hence reſults his Sovereignty and Dominion over us, which is declared in his Law, and the diſpenſations of his Providence. His Law is the Rule of our Lives and Actions, his Governing Providence the Rule of our Sufferings and Paſſions. There is indiſpenſibly due, a free and full Obedience to his Commands,

mands, and an entire univerſal Reſignation to the Orders of his Providence. The enjoyment of all our Bleſſings is from his pure Goodneſs, and rich Bounty; which requires our humble and affectionate Thankfulneſs; and his reſumption of them ſhould be entertained with a Holy and a Patient Submiſſion. He gives them freely, and may recall them at his pleaſure. In whatſoever inſtance his Will is declared, we muſt with Humility and Meekneſs ſubmit; for he hath an equal Empire in diſpoſing all things that are equally his own, and we are bound by an equal Obedience to acknowledge his Dominion. When *Eli* received the terrible meſſage of the ruin of his Family; the final exciſion of it from the dignity of the Prieſthood, he patiently ſubmits: *It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good.* The meer deſire of exemption from his over-ruling Will, is a heinous Sin; and a ſtubborn uncompliance with it in the iſſues of things, is direct Rebellion, mixt with ingratitude, obſtructive to our preſent Peace, and future Happineſs. If the Afflicted would for a while ſuſpend their Tears 1 Sam. 3. 17.

and Sighs, and with free Reason consider, that what relation soever they had in their dearest Loss, whether of a Father, a Son, of a Husband or Wife, or any other amiable and passionate terms, yet God hath a nearer right and juster claim in those Persons, being his by the best Titles of Creation and Redemption, it would silence murmurings and impatience, and stop the scope of Inordinate Sorrow. Our Propriety in them was derived from his Favour, and our Possession was depending on his Will, for his right in all his Creatures is unalienable. This consideration was the foundation of *Job*'s Patience; when he was stript of all his outward Comforts, how composed was he in his mind! how considerate in his words! he reflects upon his Native Poverty, *Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I return thither*: And adores God's Dominion, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken, blessed be his name.* Add farther, that which by immediate connection follows, the consideration of the glorious Majesty of God, and our natural meanness and unworthiness. The distance

Job 1. 21.

ſtance and diſproportion is ſo vaſt between him and us, that we are not able to conceive the full and juſt Idea of his Excellent Greatneſs: We are fain to aſſiſt our Minds in the Thoughts of God by ſenſible repreſentations; and to expreſs our Conceptions by borrowed terms; His Immenſity by the Ocean; his Eternity by the returning of a Circle into it ſelf; his Power, by Thunder; his Majeſty by the Sun in its Meridian Splendors. As the flying Fiſhes, (Shoals of which are met in ſailing to the *Indies*,) can fly no longer than their Wings remain moiſt; when thoſe Membranes are dry, they cannot move, and are forc'd to dip themſelves again in the Sea, that by ſoftning them, they may renew their Flight: Thus when we aſcend in our Minds to God, we form no Conceptions but what take their riſe from ſenſible things, which infinitely fall ſhort of his Perfections. Who can fully underſtand the tranſcendent Excellencies of his Nature? Who can deſcribe what is ineffable, and moſt worthy to be ador'd with ſilent admiration and extaſy of Mind? *He dwells in that*

Light which is inaccessible; the Angels, the most comprehensive Spirits, *vail their faces in the presence of his Glory.* He is his own Original, but without Beginning: alone, but not solitary; one ever blessed God, yet communicates his intire Deity to the Son and Spirit; he is not divided in Number, nor confused in Unity. He is not compell'd by Necessity, nor changed by Liberty, nor measur'd by Time: If we ascend to the first Fountains of all Ages, then his Infinite Understanding comprehended in one clear view, the whole compass, extent and duration of all things. His powerful Word made the visible and invisible World, and upholds them. That which was spoken with Flattery, of a *Roman* Emperor, by *Seneca*, (who as much degenerated from the dignity of a Stoical Philosopher, in licking *Nero*, as in hating *Alexander*) is absolutely true of the Sovereign Lord of the World: His Providence is the Band that unites the parts of the Universal Commonwealth, the Vital Spirit and Vertue that sustains all: Without his Eye and Hand, his dispositive Wisdom and Power,

St. *Hilary* declares of himself, *Non sibi relictum quicquam aliud à natura sua intelligere, in quo majus officium præstare conditori suo posset quam ut tantum eum esse intelligeret, quantus & intelligi non potest & potest credi.* De Trin. lib. 1.

Ille est vinculum per quod res publica cohæret; Ille spiritus vitalis, quem tot millia trahunt; nihil ipsa futura nisi onus & præda si mens illa Imperii subtrahatur. lib de *Clem.*

Power, the whole Frame would disband and fall into Confuſion and Ruin. He is ſeated upon the Throne of the Univerſe. *Thouſand thouſands of glorious Spirits miniſter unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtand before him*, in the quality and humility of his Servants, ready to execute his Commands. He is the Judge of the Living and the Dead, that diſpoſeth of Heaven and Hell for Ever. And what is Man? a little Breathing Duſt. He is infinitely above us, and ſo ſtrangely condeſcends, in having a tender care of us, that the *Pſalmiſt* was ſwallowed up in Extaſy and Amazement at the thoughts of it: *Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the ſon of man that thou regardeſt him?* Nay, we are beneath his Anger, as a Worm is not worthy of the indignation of an Angel. Now the more we magnify God, and exalt his Authority in our Judgments, the more our Wills are prepared to yield to him: *His Excellency will make us afraid to oppoſe his Providence.* When the Son of God appeared to *Saul* in his Glory, and commanded in Pſal 8.

Perſon, he preſently lets fall his Arms
Acts 9. 6. of Defiance, and ſays, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* His Reſignation was abſolute; nothing was ſo hard to do, nothing ſo formidable to ſuffer, but he was ready to accompliſh and endure in obedience to Chriſt. The more we debaſe and vilify our ſelves, the more eaſy it will be to bear what God inflicts; Humility diſpoſeth to Submiſſion. Our Paſſions are not excited at the breaking of an ordinary Glaſs; but if a Veſſel of Chriſtal be broken, it moves us: the lower eſteem we have of our ſelves; the leſs we ſhall be tranſported for any breach that is made upon us. We read in the Hiſtory of *Job*, many heavy Complaints utrered by him of his Sufferings, all the ſad Figures of Paſſionate Eloquence made uſe of to repreſent them, and the fruitleſs Eſſays of his Friends, that did rather exaſperate than appeaſe his Spirit: And it is very obſervable, that when the Lord interpoſed himſelf to juſtify the ways of his Providence, he did not charge upon him the guilt of his Sins that deſerved the ſevereſt

ſevereſt Judgments, but appears in his Glory, and reminds him of his original nothing. *Where waſt thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou haſt underſtanding.* Job 38. 4. He opens to him ſome of the Excellencies of the Deity in the works of Creation and Providence, and the preſent effect was, *Job* adored with humble Reverence the Divine Majeſty, and acknowledged his own unworthineſs: *Behold, I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth; now mine eyes ſee thee, I abhor my ſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.* The thickeſt ſmoak by aſcending, diſſipates and vaniſhes. If the troubled Soul did aſcend to Heaven, and conſider that even the worſt Evils are either from the operation or permiſſion of the Divine Providence, the Cloudy diſturbing Thoughts and Paſſions would be preſently ſcattered. *David* had a bleſſed Experiment of this in his diſtreſs: *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, becauſe thou didſt it.* Pſal. 39 8. Such an awful apprehenſion he had of God, as tranſcendently ſuperior to him, and unaccountable

countable for his proceedings. When any impatient Thoughts arise, we ſhould preſently chain them up, for there is Folly and Fury in them: What am I, that my ſullen Spirit ſhould diſpute againſt the Orders of Heaven? that my Paſſions ſhould reſiſt the Will of the higheſt Lord? that my Deſires ſhould depoſe him from his Throne? For thus by implication and conſequence they do, who are vex'd at his Providence. A Holy Soul will tremble at the Thoughts of it. Methinks God ſpeaks to the afflicted and diſturbed Soul, in the words of the Pſalm, *Be ſtill, and know that I am God.* The actual conſideration of his Supremacy will be powerful to lay the growing Storm of Paſſions. Impatience ariſeth from the ignorance of God and our ſelves.

Secondly; The Righteouſneſs of God in all his ways, if duly conſidered, will compoſe the Afflicted Spirit to quiet and humble Submiſſion. He is never injurious to us when he deprives us of our ſweeteſt and moſt precious comforts, becauſe we have incurred the forfeiture of all. He is not cruel

cruel in laying the heavieſt puniſhments upon us, for we deſerve them. If we were free from actual Sins, yet our depraved nature, ſo repugnant to the pure Law of God, involves us under an Obligation to Puniſhment. If we had not been attainted with the guilt of Original Sin, yet the Sins committed in the courſe of our Lives, make us deeply obnoxious to Divine Juſtice: How much more the concurrent guilt of Original and Actual Sins? The acts of Sin are tranſient and paſs away; but the guilt and ſtain of Sin, and the Conſcience of Sin remain, and no leſs than Eternal Puniſhment is commenſurate to the obliquity. From hence there is the cleareſt Reaſon to juſtify God in all his Proceedings. *Righteouſneſs eſtabliſhes his throne.* The Prophet ſaith, *Thy righteouſneſs is like the great mountains, thy judgments are a great deep.* The ſpecial ends of God in ſevere diſpenſations, are ſometimes indiſcernable, but never unjuſt; his Righteouſneſs is obvious to every eye. The actual conſideration of this is powerful to ſilence the uproar of the Paſſions, and to make us lye humbly at his Feet under the ſoreſt Chaſtiſements. Pſal. 36. 6.

Mic. 7. 9. ments. *I will bear the Indignation of the Lord* (without murmuring, ſaith the afflicted Church) *becauſe I have ſinned againſt him.* As diſobedience in our Inclinations and Actions, is a tacit reflection upon the equity of his Law, as if the reſtraints of it were unreaſonable; ſo Impatience and fretful Diſcontent is upon the equity of his Providence, as if the afflicting diſpenſations of it were not due to us: And the ſenſe of our Sinfulneſs, and God's Righteouſneſs, is an excellent preventive of it. If thou art in great Afflictions, and feeleſt any tumultuous Thoughts, any rebellious Riſings within thee, conſider thou art a Sinner, guilty of Ten thouſand Provocations, and dareſt thou appear before his inlightned and terrible Tribunal, and Challenge him for any unrighteous Proceedings? *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins? Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I will not offend any more. That which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* Beſides, all the Puniſhments of Men here, are with Merciful

Lam. 3. 39.

Job 34. 31, 32.

Allays,

Allays, not in juſt proportion to their Guilt. The Church in its calamitous State, deſcribed in the moſt doleful Lamentations of *Jeremiah*, when the greateſt number of the *Jews* periſhed by the Sword, or Famine that attended the War, their City and Temple were laid in Ruins, and the unhappy People that eſcaped the fury of the *Chaldeans*, were the Captives and Triumphs of their Enemies; yet in that unparallel'd Affliction ſhe acknowledges, *It is the Lord's mercies that we are not* utterly and totally *conſumed*; Lam. 3. 22. and lays her Mouth in the Duſt, a poſture of the loweſt abaſement. And Holy *Ezra* reflecting upon that dreadful Calamity, acknowledgeth their Puniſhment was beneath their deſert, as their Deliverance was above their expectation: *And for all that is come upon us for our evil deeds and great treſpaſſes, ſeeing thou haſt puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and given us ſuch a deliverance as this.* Our Deſerts are leſs than the leaſt of God's Mercies, and our Offences greater than the greateſt of his Judgments. This ſhould make us not only patiently Ezra 9. 13.

Levit. 26. 41. ently ſubmit, *but humbly accept the puniſhment of our iniquity, as far leſs than what is deſerved.* If the Sentence of Death againſt a Malefactor be exchanged for Baniſhment, or Baniſhment be remitted for a ſhort Confinement, is there not incomparable more cauſe to be thankful for what is pardoned, than to complain for what is ſuffered? What Ingratitude is it to be impatient and murmuring for theſe *light afflictions that are but for a moment*, when we deſerve an eternal and inſupportable weight of Miſery in Hell? It is infinitely more becoming us and ſafe, to argue againſt our irregular Paſſions, than to tax his Righteous Diſpenſations.

Thirdly; His Power is Immenſe and Uncontroulable, and it is a vain attempt to contend with him, as if the Eternal Order of his Decrees could be altered or broken. The Conteſt between God and the Sinner, is, Whoſe Will ſhall ſtand. It is his glorious work to depreſs the Proud, and ſubdue the ſtubborn refractory Spirits. The Puniſhment of the firſt Pride in the Angels, is an Eternal

Eternal and terrible Example of his powerful Juſtice; and how intolerable a Crime it is, that Heaven could not bear, but preſently opened, and the Guilty fell into the bottomleſs Pit. Now Pride is a ſeminal Evil, and lies at the root of Stubbornneſs and Impatience under Judgments. Proud Duſt is apt to fly in God's Face upon every motion of the Afflicting Paſſions. And by the reſiſtance of Self-Will he is provoked to more Severity. *Wo be to him that ſtrives with his Maker.* This is to be like a reſtive Horſe or Mule, without Underſtanding, that flings and foams when the Burthen is laid upon him, but gets nothing but Blows, without the removal of the Burthen. It is our Duty and Intereſt to obſerve the Bleſſed Apoſtle's direction, *Humble your ſelves under the mighty hand of God, and he ſhall exalt you.* There is a paſſive Humbling by his irreſiſtible Providence, and an active voluntary humbling, which implies a ſubjection to his Law, and a ſubmiſſion to his Providence: This is infinitely pleaſing to him, 'tis the right diſpoſition that prepares us for

Iſa. 45. 9.

1 Pet. 5. 6.

for Mercy, and is the certain way of Exaltation; for then God obtains his End. The humble proſtrating our ſelves at his Feet to receive his Correction, cauſes his Bowels to relent, and ſtops his Hand: the ſeeming humiliation of *Ahab* procured a reſpite of thoſe fearful Judgments denounced againſt his Houſe. It is ſaid of the generoſity of the Lion, that he ſpares his proſtrate Adverſary. In ſhort, our Salvation depends upon our humble demeanor under afflictive
Heb. 12. 9. Diſpenſations. *We have had fathers of our fleſh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; ſhall we not much more be in ſubjection to the father of ſpirits, and live?* Unſubmiſſion induces a deadly guilt upon the Rebellious.

Fourthly; His Paternal Love in ſending Afflictions, is a ſufficient Argument to win our compliance with his Will. The bleſſed Apoſtle applying Lenitives to the Afflicted, propounds two Divine Truths, that if ſeriouſly thought of, and ſtedfaſtly believed, are powerful to mitigate the acerbity of all Sufferings, and ſupport the

the Spirit in the greateſt Agony. The firſt is, *God ſcourgeth every ſon whom he receiveth:* And the other that is joined with it is, *Whom the Lord loves he chaſteneth.* Heb 12 6.

The Rule is general:

Firſt; All his Sons are under the Diſcipline of the Rod; and who would be ſo unhappy as to be exempted from that number, for all the Proſperity of the World? Afflictions ſanctified, are the conſpicuous Seal of their Adoption and Title to Heaven: And who would forfeit the honour of that Adoption, and loſe the benefit annex'd to it, the eternal Inheritance, rather than patiently bear his Fatherly Chaſtiſements? Others that enjoy a perpetual Spring of Pleaſure here, are declared Baſtards, and not Sons: They are indeed within the compaſs of his Univerſal Providence, but not of that Peculiar Care that belongs to his Sacred and Select Progeny. His Corrections are an Argument of his Authority as our Father, and an aſſurance that we are his Children: This ſhould induce us not only with ſubmiſs Temper of Soul, but

with Thankfulneſs to receive the ſharpeſt Correction from the hands of our Heavenly Father. This was the reaſon of our Saviour's meek yielding himſelf to the Violence and Cruelty of his Enemies. *The cup which my father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?*

Secondly; Chaſtiſement is the effect of his Paternal Love: He is the Father of our Spirits, and that Divine Relation carries with it a ſpecial Love to the Spirits of Men, and in that degree of Eminence, as to ſecure and advance their happineſs, though to the deſtruction of the Fleſh. The Soul is of incomparable more worth than the Body, as the bright Orient Pearl than the mean Shell that contains it: This God moſt highly values; for this he gave ſo great a Price, and on it draws his Image. If Temporal Proſperity were for our beſt advantage, how willingly would God beſtow it on us? Rom. 8. 32. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?* Which Words, among all that the Holy Ghoſt hath dictated to the Interpreters of God's heart to his People, are moſt expreſſive

preſſive of his Love and Bounty, and moſt for their Comfort. He that gives Grace and Glory, the moſt real Teſtimonies of his Love, certainly withholds no good thing from them. I ſhall produce one convincing Inſtance of this. St. *Paul*, who by an incomparable Privilege was rapt up to the Celeſtial Paradiſe, and heard ineffable things, yet was tormented by the Angel of Satan, and his earneſt repeated Prayer for deliverance not preſently granted. Did not God love that bleſſed Apoſtle, whoſe internal Love to Chriſt almoſt equall'd the Seraphims, thoſe pure everlaſting Flames, and was expreſſed in the invariable Tenor of his Life, by ſuch miraculous Actions and Sufferings for the propagating and defence of the Faith of Chriſt, and the Glory of his Name? *If we love him becauſe he firſt loved us*, as St. *John* teſtifies, certainly he that returned ſuch a ſuperlative Affection to Chriſt, received the greateſt Love from him. Now if Chriſt did love *Paul*, why did he not upon his earneſt repeated Prayer, deliver him from his wounding Trouble, whatſoever it

was? That Permiſſion was a demonſtration of the Love of Chriſt to him, as it is acknowledged by himſelf; *Leſt*
2 Cor. 13. 7. *I ſhould be exalted above meaſure through the abundance of revelation, there was given to me a thorn in the fleſh, and the meſſenger of Satan to buffet me.* That the Afflictions of the Saints proceed from God's Love, will be evident, by conſidering,

I. His gracious Deſign in ſending them.

II. His compaſſionate Providence over them, and his aſſiſting Power afforded to his People in their Troubles.

III. The happy iſſue out of them.

Firſt; His gracious Deſign in ſend-
Heb. 12. 10. ing them. *God doth not afflict willingly, but if need be; not for his own pleaſure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holineſs.* The expreſſion is high and emphatical, *his Holineſs*, the brighteſt Glory of his Nature, the divineſt Gift of his Love.

The two principal parts of Holineſs, are ceaſing from doing Evil, and learning

ing to do well. And Afflictions are ordained and ſent as profitable for both theſe Effects.

1. For the prevention or cure of Sin, which is an evil incomparably worſe in its nature, and terrible conſequents in this and the next World, than all meer afflicting temporal Evils. Sin defiles and debaſeth the Soul, which is the proper excellency of Man, and ſeparates from God our Supreme Good. *Your ſins have ſeparated between you and your God, and have hid his face from you.* Iſa. 59. 2. All Afflictions that can befal us here in our Perſons or Concernments, the moſt diſgraceful Accidents, the moſt reproachful contumelious Slanders, the moſt loathſome contagious Diſeaſes, that cauſe our deareſt Friends to withdraw from us, yet cannot deprive us of Union with God by Faith and Love, nor of the fruition of his propitious Preſence. *Lazarus* when covered with Ulcers, was kiſſed with the Kiſſes of his Mouth: But Sin hath this pernicious effect, it ſeparates from his gracious Preſence here, and, if continued in without

Repentance, will exclude from his Glorious Preſence for ever. Now Afflictions are Medicinal Applications for the Cure of Sin, the Diſeaſe and Death of the Soul, and therefore infinitely worſe than the ſharpeſt Remedies.

The beginnings and progreſs of Converſion to God, are uſually by ſanctified Afflictions. Indeed, conſidering our folly, and perverſe abuſe of his Bleſſings, they are the moſt congruous means for our Recovery. The Light of God's Law doth not ſo powerfully convince us of the Evil of Sin, till felt in the effects of it. *Thy own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee, and thy backſlidings ſhall reprove thee; know therefore and ſee that it is an evil thing and a bitter, that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* The Inſtructions of the Rod are more ſenſible than of the Word; as the feeling of a tormenting Diſeaſe produceth another kind of underſtanding of it, than the reading of its nature in Books of Phyſick; and they make us more attentive to God's Call, and

Jer. 2. 19.

and leave a deeper impreſſion upon us. It is *Elihu* his obſervation, *If ſinners be bound in fetters, and held in cords, then he ſhews them their works, and their tranſgreſſions, that they have exceeded.* Affliction clarifies their ſight, makes Sin to be as heinous in the view of Conſcience, as in its own foul nature. It follows, *He openeth alſo the ear to diſcipline, and commandeth that they return from their iniquity.* Gentle Methods were loſt upon them, but by Judgments he effectually commands, they relent and return to their Duty. And after Converſion, we need their Diſcipline, to make us more circumſpect and obedient. The *Pſalmiſt* declares, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted:* For before he was afflicted he went aſtray: He was reduced from the Error of his ways by his Troubles: And 'twas his experimental Obſervation, *I know in faithfulneſs* (from the conſtancy of Love) *thou haſt afflicted me.* Nothing ſo cools our Zeal to Eternal things, as the Love of the World. Vital Heat declines and languiſhes, as the Feaveriſh Heat is inflamed; and till we feel the Vexa-

Job 36. 8, 9.

Ver. 10.

Pſal. 119.

tions, we are allured by the Vanities of the World: Therefore God is pleaſed by ſuch bitter means to make us more Holy and Heavenly. Sometimes he removes with Jealouſy thoſe Objects to which our hearts are ſo entirely engaged, that the enjoyment of them intercepts the aſcending of our affections to himſelf. Beſides, he will not ſuffer us to periſh in Proſperity.

1 Cor. 11. *We are chaſtened of the Lord for our amendment, that we may not be condemned with the unreformed world.* And is not this an infallible teſtimony of his love? *David* ſaid, *Let the righteous*

Pſal. 141. 5. *ſmite me, and it ſhall be a kindneſs; let him reprove me, and it ſhall be an excellent oil.* If he valued the Reprehenſions that were not contumelious and injurious, not to upbraid but reform him, as a favour and dear obligation, how much more ſhould we the corrections of our Heavenly Father? And it will be a greater incitement to an humble and grateful acceptance of this Diſcipline, if we conſider what a ſevere neglect it is, when God ſuffers the Wicked to lead a Voluptuous Life without diſturbance: They

They are encircled with Riches and Honours, ſoftned with Pleaſures, charmed with inticing Objects, and thus become harden'd in Sin; they are Riotous and Luxurious, and give the Reins to their corrupt unruly Appetites without controul; the Slaves of Senſe, led only by Principles of Pleaſure, and hereby are inexcuſable, and made ripe for Perdition, and reſerved for final Vengeance. Others, though not guilty of ſcandalous Enormities, yet are by continual Proſperity ſettled upon their Lees, careleſs and ſecure, *neglect the great ſalvation*, and ſay in their hearts, *It is good to be here*; and their Damnation is as certain, though not ſo viſible, as of thoſe who commit groſs and open Wickedneſs. Sad Preterition! In the midſt of Pleaſures they are truly miſerable. They have juſt reaſon to be abandoned to Sorrow, being forſaken of the Love of God. The Bramble is not cut, when the Vine is pruned till it bleeds, in order to its fruitfulneſs: This letting them alone to take their fill of Pleaſures, is a heavy Preſage of final Ruin. When the Patient is deſperate, Heb. 4. 14.

ſperate, the Phyſician lays no Reſtraint upon the diſeaſed Appetite, but permits him to take what he craves.

Beſides, the Intention of God is by Affliction to exerciſe and illuſtrate their Graces. The moſt excellent Chriſtian Virtues would be comparatively of little uſe, without hard Trials. Unfeigned Faith in the Truth and Power of God to accompliſh his Promiſes, ſincere Love to him, humble Self-denial, perſevering Patience then appear in their Radiancy and Vigor. What a bleſſed advantage is it, by the loſs of Temporal Comforts to increaſe in the Graces of the Spirit? They are the trueſt Riches, the fulleſt Joy, and the higheſt Honour of a Chriſtian.

1 Pet. 1.7. St. *Peter* declares, *The trial of our faith is much more precious than of gold that peiſheth*; 'tis refined and reſplendent by the Fire of Affliction, and *will be found unto praiſe, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Chriſt.* It is the Advice of St. *James*,

Jam. 1.2,3. *Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience.*

ence. Though Afflictions ſimply conſidered, may be very grievous, yet if we adviſedly weigh, and rightly compare things, even when our ſorrowful Paſſions are moved, our Judgments will eſteem them matter of Joy, not only in expectation of future Happineſs, but as Divine Grace is thereby drawn forth in the moſt noble Operations. In ſhort, the ultimate deſign of God in afflicting his People, is thereby to bring them to Heaven. Affliction mortifies the Luſts of the Fleſh, purifies the Spirit, *and makes us fit for the inheritance of the ſaints in light.* By perſevering Patience in Sufferings, they are approved of God, and obtain a Right and Title to the Kingdom of Glory. For according to the tenor of the Covenant of Grace, Heaven ſhall be conferred as a Reward to thoſe that overcome. If there be no Enemy, there will be no Fight; and if no Fight, no Victory; if no Victory, no Triumph; only thoſe who conquer are crowned. Rev. 2.

The beloved Diſciple, with his Brother, though allied to our Saviour by

by Conſanguinity, who expected by ſpecial favour to be glorified without a preparatory Trial, yet he tells them, *without drinking of his cup, they could not have a ſhare in his kingdom:* And this ſhould reconcile our Spirits to all our troubles; for the Apoſtle declares, who was a competent Judge, having been throughly acquainted with Griefs, and had a Proſpect into the Glorious Kingdom; *I reckon that*
Rom. 8. *the ſufferings of this preſent life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that ſhall be revealed in us.*

II. God's Love is diſcovered in his compaſſionate Providence over them, and aſſiſting Power afforded to them in their Afflictions: He ſpeaks to the afflicted and diſconſo-
Heb. 12. 5. late, *My ſon, deſpiſe not thou the chaſtening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:* To ſweeten by that tender expreſſion, the rigor of his Diſcipline; to ſignify his dear ſympathy with their Anguiſh and Sufferings.

Heavenly Conſolation! God himſelf bears a ſhare in their Sorrows, *is afflicted*

afflicted in their Afflictions: And the effect of this Love is, that he always tempers and moderates their Trials to their Strength; or increaſes their Strength in proportion to the Trial. His Corrections are deliberate Diſpenſations, that proceed from Judgment, not from Fury, which the Prophet earneſtly deprecates. His Rods are bound up with Mercy, his Faithfulneſs joins with his Affection, in moderating their Sufferings. It is one Clauſe of the Covenant of Grace, made with Chriſt, typified by *David*, *If his children break my ſtatutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I viſit their tranſgreſſion with a rod*, to amend, not to deſtroy them; *but my loving kindneſs I will not take away from them, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail.* The Apoſtle aſſures Believers, *That God is faithful, who will not ſuffer them to be tempted above what they are able, but will with the temptation make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it.* Our Redeemer in his Agony was relieved by Heavenly Succor, the preſence of an Angel with a Meſſage of

Jer. 8.

Pſal. 89 31, 32, 33.

1 Cor. 10. 13.

of Comfort. St. *Paul* found it verified by his own Experience, *That as the ſufferings of Chriſt abounded in him, ſo his conſolations abounded by Chriſt*, and the Divine Power was accompliſhed, illuſtriouſly appeared in ſupporting his weakneſs. How many have enjoyed Comforts of a more precious nature, and more abundant, in want of Supplies from the World, than in the poſſeſſion of them? When there is a total Eclipſe below, the bleſſed Comforter deſcends with Light, and fills the Soul with Joy in believing.

2 Cor. 1, 5.

2 Cor. 12. 9.

* *Acin quamvis de miſſum Ætna nullus frigore ante vertit.* Solin.

The Hiſtorian tells us of a * clear Vein of Water that ſprings from *Mongibel*, (that great Furnace, that always ſends forth ſmoke or flames,) yet is ſo cool, as if it diſtilled from a Snowy Mountain: thus the Saints in the fiery trial have been often refreſhed with Divine Comforts; and ſuch humble Submiſſions, and gracious Thankſgivings have proceeded from their Lips, as have been very comfortable to thoſe about them.

Third-

Thirdly; The Iſſue out of all, is the moſt ſenſible declaration of God's Love to them. The continuance is limited by his tender Love, till they are prepared for Mercy. The Proſperity of the Wicked is Wine in the beginning, and Lees at the bottom; but the worſt and afflicted ſtate of the Saints is firſt, and will at length certainly end in Felicity. In the Tragedy of *Job*, the Devil was the Author, *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans* were the Actors, *but the end was from the Lord.* We are inſtructed by the Apoſtle, *That although no chaſtiſement for the preſent ſeems to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheleſs afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteouſneſs, unto them that are exerciſed thereby.* Heb. 12. 11. It is an alluſion to the Rewards in the *Olympick* Games, when the perſons that overcame in thoſe Exerciſes, were crowned with Wreaths of Olive-Leaves, the Emblem of Peace. Thus Chriſtians, who with unfainting perſeverance in their Duty ſuffer Affliction, ſhall be rewarded with Holineſs in conjunction with Peace. This peaceable fruit of Righteouſneſs

neſs is not the natural product of Affliction: Grapes do not ſpring from Thorns, nor Figs from Thiſtles; neither can it be ſo properly aſcribed to the afflicted perſon, as to the powerful Virtue, and ſpecial Grace of the Holy Spirit, who ſanctifies Afflictions, and makes them profitable for effecting God's intention by them. And when the afflicted perſon becomes more humble, more holy, more weaned from the World, more reſigned to the Will of God, this *fruit unto holineſs* will compenſate all their Pains and Sorrows. And in conjunction with Holineſs, there is a Divine Peace, a joyful Calm and quietneſs of Conſcience, in the ſenſe of God's favour; his anſwers of Peace are uſually a reward, according to the Operations of Grace: His Comforts are diſpenſed as Encouragements to Obedience. Beſides, when the ſinful Corruptions are purged out, which cauſed perpetual diſturbance, and our Affections and Actions are correſpondent to the Divine Law, there is that clearneſs and ſerenity of Mind, that reſt and eaſe in

in the Soul, ariſing from its juſt and due ſubordination unto God, which the diſobedient, in all their ſeeming proſperity, never enjoy. *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.* Theſe beginnings of happineſs are obtained here, but the perfection of it is in the next Life. *Bleſſed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he ſhall receive the crown of righteouſneſs, which God hath promiſed to them that love him.* The richneſs and value of the *Crown of Life* is ſo great, that God, the moſt wiſe and juſt eſteemer of things, gave the precious Blood of his Son to purchaſe it for us. It is a Felicity ſo tranſcendent in its quality, and ſtable in its duration, that the Bleſſed God cannot give us a greater; For what greater good is conceivable than himſelf? And what more ſtable enjoyment of it than Eternity? The hope of this makes a Chriſtian bleſſed in the midſt of the greateſt miſeries. *Our light afflictions that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

Jam. 1. 12.

2 Cor. 4.

Fifthly; The infinite Wiſdom of God orders all things in the beſt

manner for his own Glory, and the final Good of his People. If he governed by abſolute Empire, none in Heaven or Earth might ſay unto him, What doſt thou? But there is an inſeparable connection between
1 Tim. 1. his Wiſdom and his Will; he is *the King eternal*, and *the only wiſe God*, as the Apoſtle joins thoſe Divine Titles. In this the excellence of the Divine Liberty ſhines, that 'tis always regulated by Infinite Wiſdom:
Eph. 1. 11. *He works all things according to the counſel of his will:* This is ſpoken according to human conceptions, but muſt be underſtood in a ſenſe becoming the Perfections of God: For Counſel cannot properly be attributed to God, whoſe Underſtanding is Infinite, and in one view comprehends all things; but as thoſe things are moſt compleat that are the product of our deliberate reaſonings and
Deut. 32. 4. deep contrivance; *ſo his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment.* Whenever we are diſſatisfied or diſpleaſed with his Proceedings, it is from the Error of our Minds, and the Viciouſneſs of our Affections;

we

we preſume to correct his Providence, as if it were defective in regulating the affairs of this lower World; but *he is wonderful in counſel, and excellent in working.* In the Creation this regular and beautiful World was formed out of Darkneſs and Confuſion: And his Providence, that is now myſterious and vailed to us, will bring into glorious Order and ſweet Agreement, thoſe things in their final reſolution, that now ſeem ſo perplex'd to our Apprehenſions. 'Twas a confounding reproach from God to *Job*, *Who is this that darkens counſel by words without knowledge?* His paſſionate exclamations were ſuch, as if the Divine Wiſdom had not diſpoſed all the Afflicting circumſtances in the ſeries of his Sufferings; and that Holy Man being convinced of his preſumptuous Folly, repeats the Charge againſt himſelf with tears of Confuſion: *Who is he that hideth counſel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I underſtood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not; wherefore I abhor my ſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes:* More particularly,

Iſa. 28. 29.

Job 32. 2.

Job 42. 3, 6.

First; All things are so wisely ordered, that God shall be glorified in the event; and it is the noblest disposition of a Christian, to prefer the advancement of his Glory, before all the Comforts of this Life, and Life it self. Our Blessed Saviour in the Forethoughts of his Sufferings, was in distress and perturbation of Mind, like the darkening of the Sky before a great Shower: *Now is my soul troubled, what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.* But the short conflict of Nature was presently at an end, he willingly yielded up himself to be a Sacrifice to the Divine Honour, and said, *Father, glorify thy name.* *Moses* and *Paul*, whose admirable Zeal, had only a Parallel between themselves in the same degree of Holy heat, desired the Salvation of the *Jews* before their own, if God might be more glorified by it. This is the first Petition in Order and Dignity, in that compleat form of Prayer composed by our Saviour, as the Rule of all our desires. *Thy Name be hallowed and glorified in us, and by us.* The admirable

John 12. 27.

rable Hiſtory of *Jephtha*'s only Daughter, is applicable to this purpoſe; ſhe joyfully came forth to meet her Father, returning Victorious and Triumphant after his War with the *Ammonites*. He had made a raſh Vow, to offer up in Sacrifice to God, whoever ſhould firſt meet him after his Victory; and upon the ſight of his Daughter was ſo deeply wounded with Sorrow, that his Triumph was converted into Lamentations: But the Grief was only in the Father; for in that firſt ſurpriſe of ſuch a terrible Sentence to be executed upon her, ſhe did not anſwer his Tears with Tears, nor Lamentations with Lamentations, but ſaid unto him, *My father, if thou haſt opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth, foraſmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee on thine enemies.* Methinks the admirable Love and Generoſity in a young Virgin, to whom her Father's Honour and Exaltation was more dear than her Life, upbraids us for our unwilling ſubmiſſion to thoſe Providential Diſ- Judg. 11. 36.

penſations that are ungrateful to Fleſh and Blood, wherein the Glory of God is advanced. If we were called to Martyrdom for his Truth, and our Lives ſhould bleed forth, as Sacrifices on the Altar, or our Bodies be conſumed as Incenſe on the Cenſer, it were an unjuſt and ungrateful complaint, to expreſs paſſionate reluctancy againſt his Providence. If there were no other conſequences of our preſent Sufferings, but the glorifying God, we ſhould be content. That is the worthieſt end which he propoſeth to himſelf, and will accompliſh: His Divine Excellencies will be illuſtrated by the wickedneſs of Men, that at preſent obſcures the Glory of his Government; his Wiſdom, Power, Holineſs, Mercy and Juſtice will be acknowledged, admired, and magnified at laſt.

2. His Wiſdom will order all things, even the moſt afflicting and dolorous, for the good of his People. This is a fearful Paradox to a carnal Mind, that judgeth of Good and Evil, as preſent things are pleaſant or unpleaſant

pleaſant to ſenſe, without regard to what is future. 'Tis like *Sampſon*'s Riddle to the *Philiſtines*, *Out of the devourer came meat, and out of the ſtrong came ſweetneſs:* But to the Mind that hath ſpiritual diſcerning, and judgeth of Good and Evil, as things are conducive or deſtructive to the happineſs of the Soul, it is a clear undoubted Truth. *We know*, Rom. 8. ſaith the Apoſtle with the greateſt 28. aſſurance, *that all things work together for good to them that love God.* All things, the moſt adverſe to their preſent deſires, are ſo diſpoſed and overruled by his Providence, as if there were a ſecret intelligence and concert between them, to promote the Happineſs of the Saints: Thus in mix'd Bodies the contrary qualities are reduced to ſuch a juſt meaſure and temperament by the Wiſdom of the Divine Maker, that a ſound and healthful Conſtitution reſults from them. We have a rare inſtance of this in the Hiſtory of *Joſeph*; his envious Brethren were the Inſtruments of his Exaltation; they ſold him for a Slave into *Egypt* to fruſtrate his

Prophetick Dreams; and there by many admirable turns of Providence, he was advanced to the higheſt Dignity; and then was verified in him and his Brethren, *that his ſheaf aroſe and ſtood upright, and their ſheaves ſtood round, and did obeiſance to his ſheaf.* God had reſerved purpoſes of greater good for *Joſeph*, than if he had continued under his Fathers tender Eye and Care; therefore 'tis ſaid in his Hiſtory, that they perfidiouſly *ſold him, but God ſent him.* He that attentively reads the Journies of the *Iſraelites* through the Wilderneſs to *Canaan*, cannot but wonder at the Circuits and indirect motions in their tedious Travel for Forty Years; and when near the Borders of the place, ſo long and ardently deſired, they were often commanded to retreat in the ſame Line wherein they had advanced to it: Had they choſe the ſhorteſt way, and diſobeyed the Divine Conductor, they had never entred into the Land of Promiſe: But following the Pillar that directed their March, though they ſeem'd loſt in their intricate wandrings,

yet they obtained the joyful poſſeſſion of it. This was a Type of the Saints paſſage through a troubleſome World, to the true reſt above, and that they are guided through many croſs ways directly to the Kingdom of Heaven. *Who knows*, ſaith Solomon, *what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he ſpendeth as a ſhadow?* That which is deſired with importunity, as tending to his Happineſs, often proves his Woe; Some had not been ſo wicked, and conſequently ſo miſerable, if their Luſts had not been excited by Riches and Power: Others had not been ſecured from deſtructive Temptations, but in a low and afflicted ſtate. 'Tis therefore both our Duty and Intereſt not to pray abſolutely for any temporal thing; but when our Deſires are moſt paſſionate, to ſay with the humility and holineſs, the reverence and obedience of our Saviour, *Not my will, but thine be done.* We ſhall find our ſelves more happy by the Divine diſpoſal of things, than if we had obtained our deareſt Wiſhes, and moſt ardent Prayers,

Eccleſ. 6. 12.

Prayers. And when we ſhall come to the top of the Holy Hill, and look down on the various Circuits of Providence by which we aſcended, we ſhall then underſtand that Wiſdom and Love conducted us ſafely to Felicity; we ſhall approve and admire all the Divine methods in order to our bleſſed End. Now the belief of this ſhould compoſe us to a patient and chearful Reſignation of our ſelves to God's Providence and Pleaſure. Who would not accept of the Counſel of a Friend that proceeds from Love, though his Judgment were not ſo exact as to be relied on? Much more ſhould we thankfully receive the Appointments of God, whoſe Knowledge and Affection are equally ſuperlative, in whom there is united the Wiſdom of a Father's, and the Tenderneſs of a Mother's Love to his Children. Briefly, As *Jonathan* by taſting the Honey at the end of his Rod, had his eyes enlightened, ſo the end of the ſevereſt Chaſtiſements will convince them, that the Providence of God was more benign and propitious than they could imagine.

gine. *His ways are as far above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth.* This Point is applicable to us.

Firſt; By way of Reproof for our unſubmiſſive behaviour in Afflictions, our uncompliance with the Divine Diſpoſals. Some are in a ſecret diſcontent at God's Afflicting Providence; and this razeth the memory of former Mercies, and takes away the reliſh of preſent Mercies; as the ſweet Showers of Heaven that fall into the Sea are turned into its brackiſh taſte: Such neither enjoy God nor themſelves. What egregious folly and vile ingratitude is this! All we have, is from his moſt free favour; and ſhall we peeviſhly ſlight his Benefits, becauſe our Deſires are not gratified in every reſpect? Others are moved with Anger and Vexation for the Evils that befall them: As the Red-hot Iron under the Blows of the Hammer caſts abroad Fiery Sparks; ſo their ſtubborn fierce Spirits, when afflicted, break forth in expreſſions of impatience and diſpleaſure. *Uſe.* 1.

ſure. They count it a baſe abjectneſs of Mind, a deſpicable Puſillanimity, to humble themſelves under God's Judgments, and with contrition for their Sins to implore his Clemency. *The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, the timerous and weak creatures: But when the heavens roar, the lions thunder back again.* Thus ſtrong and ſtubborn Sinners, when they feel the effects of God's Anger, are raging and furious in their Paſſions and Expreſſions. *The fooliſh man perverteth his way, his moſt grievous ſufferings are the fruits of his ſins, and his heart fretteth againſt the Lord as the inflicter of them.* This is a high indignity to God, and an injury to themſelves. For a vile Creature, a baſe guilty Wretch to murmur and ſtorm againſt God's righteous Judgments, argues a Prodigious Forgetfulneſs, both of its dependance and obnoxiouſneſs to the Divine Tribunal. It is ſaid of the adherents of Antichriſt, *That they were ſcorched with great heat, and blaſphemed the name of God, which hath power over the plagues, and they repented*

Prov. 19. 3.

Rev. 16. 9.

pented not to give him glory. Infinite Inſolence! Such obſtinate Souls the Prince of Darkneſs poſſeſſes as his peculiar Dominion; they have more need of Converſion than Conſolation. Beſides, by impatience and vexatious fretting, they exaſperate their pains, turn the Rod into a Serpent, Vipers into Dragons; and God's mighty hand is more heavy by their reſiſtance. Bold Expoſtulations irritate his Anger, rather than incline his Mercy; the wilful Man never wants Woe. *With the froward*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf froward*, or, as it is rendred in the Margent, *wreſtle.* The ſtrongeſt Sinner is not a Match for the Almighty; if his Anger excite his Power, how eaſily, *how ſuddenly are they deſtroyed without remedy?* Stubborn impatience under the inflictions of God's righteous Providence, is the neareſt Step to final ruin. Others are ſo dejected and broken with Afflictions, that their continuance in the World is but a Living Death: Every thing Entertains their Grief, and the beſt means afforded for their reviving and com-

Pſal. 80.

fort are ineffectual. Sorrow flows into Deſpair, they lament and languiſh as if their caſe were hopeleſs and remedileſs. The Fountain of this black Stream, is a ſuperlative eſteem and affection to inferior things: And what is reſerved for the Bleſſed Creator? If a temporal Loſs be the moſt afflicting Evil, 'tis a ſign that God was not valued and loved as the chiefeſt Good. The difficulty of receiving Conſolation, ſhews the neceſſity of their being afflicted: The Language of ſuch reſolved Sorrow is, *They have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* The ſole objects of their felicity are removed, and they refuſe to be comforted; as if no leſs Sacrifice were due to the remembrance of their loſs, but Life it ſelf. What a diſparagement is this of the Divine Excellencies? *Are the conſolations of God ſmall to us?* Is not his Love able to compenſate the loſs of a frail, mutable, mortal Creature? Cannot he pleaſe and ſatisfy us without the fruition of one Earthly Comfort? This dejection of Spirit is equally undutiful as uncomfortable;

ble; our Griefs are sometimes as vain and as guilty as our Joys; there is a tincture of Disobedience in our Tears; for we are commanded *to mourn as if we mourned not, for the fashion of the world passeth away*; and we at once break his Law and our own Peace. Our Disobedience in this is aggravated, as being contrary not only to the Authority and Sanctity of the Lawgiver, but to his Loving-kindness and Compassion. Ah, the miserable blindness of Human Minds! and the more miserable, because voluntary. Who is more deservedly unhappy than one that sits upon the bank of a River, and yet is Tormented and Dies with Thirst? The clear, fresh Stream passeth before him, allures and invites him, but he will not stoop to drink; this is the case of those who neglect and refuse the Spiritual Consolations in the Gospel, that are compared to the flowing Rivers of Living Water, for their cooling, refreshing quality. They meritoriously and actively bring trouble to their Souls; their Passions are the Instruments of their Misery. John 7. 38, 39.

He

He that is his own Executioner, has no excuse of Dying; he is justly, because wilfully miserable.

Consider also what a reproach is cast upon Christianity, that so many virtuous Heathens in great Afflictions, were in some measure supported by the Precepts of Human Wisdom; and that Christians, to whom there is Revealed from Heaven, That an Eternal State of Glory and Joy shall be the Reward of their patient Sufferings, remain utterly disconsolate. I will single out one example, *Stilpon* the Philosopher, when his City was destroyed, with his Wife and Children, and he escap'd alone from the Fire, being asked whether he had lost any thing? Replied, *All my Treasures are with me*, Justice, Virtue, Temperance, Prudence, and this inviolable Principle, Not to esteem any thing as my proper Good, that can be ravish'd from me: His Mind was erect and stedfast under the Ruins of his Country. And others upon lower and less generous considerations, have born up in their Sufferings. How do such Examples upbraid

Omnia bona mea mecum sunt. Justitia, Virtus, Temperantia, Prudentia, hoc ipsum nihil boni putare quod eripi possit. Seneca. *Epist.* 9.

braid us, that their Twilight excels our Noonday Brightneſs? If common Cordials raiſed ſuch couragious Spirits in them, ſhall not the Waters of Life, the Divine ſtrong Comforts of the Goſpel, fortify us to bear all Sufferings with a valiant Reſignation to the Good Will of God? Can the Spirit of a Man, by rational Principles ſuſtain his Infirmities, and cannot the Spirit of God, the great Comforter, ſupport us under all Troubles? What a blot is this to Religion? Thoſe who will not be comforted, will not be Chriſtians; by the ſame Holy Spirit who is ſtiled the Comforter, we are the one and the other. If the precious Promiſes of the Goſpel do not alleviate our Sorrows, 'tis not from Infirmity, but from Infidelity. 'Tis an incredible Miracle, that a perſon can be in reality a Chriſtian, and not capable of Conſolation; as if Eternal Life were not purchaſed by Chriſt for his People, or the preſent Sufferings were comparable to the future Glory; or the poſſeſſion of it were to be obtained after a thouſand years of hard trial: But if it were

delayed ſo long, that ſenſible duration ſhould not ſink our Spirits; for the Miſery that paſſeth with Time, is not of moment with reſpect to the Bleſſedneſs that is eſtabliſh'd for ever.

Uſe 2. Secondly; Let us be excited to tranſcribe this Divine Leſſon (ſo full of excellency and difficulty) in our Hearts and Lives. 'Tis eaſy in Speculation to conſent to the reaſonableneſs of this Duty, but how hard to practiſe it, and to bear not too ſenſibly ſuch Evils as are incurable here? A deliberate, univerſal, conſtant ſubjection to God's Will, though contrary to our carnal deſires and intereſts, how rarely is it to be found among thoſe who in Title and Profeſſion are his Servants? In Active Obedience, ſome will readily perform ſome particular Commands, but withdraw ſubjection from the reſt; they ſeem to make Conſcience of the Duties of Piety, but neglect Righteouſneſs; or elſe are juſt in their Dealings, and careleſs of Devotion. Some are liberal, but irreconcilable; they will give for their Honour, but forgive

give no Contempt or Injury; and as the dividing living Twins deſtroys them, ſo the Life and Sincerity of Obedience, that conſiſts in the union and entireneſs of its parts, is deſtroyed by dividing our Reſpects to ſome Commands, neglecting the reſt. And in *Paſſive Obedience*, many will ſubmit to lighter and ſhorter Afflictions, but if an Evil comes that nearly touches the heart, or that remains long without redreſs, they become impatient, or ſo dejected as to neglect their Duty. I ſhall therefore ſuperadd to the former Arguments, wherein the Neceſſity, the Equity, and the Policy of our dutiful Reſignation to God's Providence is clearly ſet forth, ſome other Motives and Directions, that may be uſeful and effectual for this end.

First; Look frequently to Jeſus Chriſt, the Author and Finiſher of our Faith: The Divine Wiſdom, to reform the World, aſſumed the Human Nature, and expreſſed in a Holy Converſation upon Earth, a living Copy of his Precepts, to direct us in

the various parts of our Duty; and because the exercise of Humility, Self-denial, and the rest of the suffering Graces, is so difficult to our frail and tender Nature; he ascended the Cross, and instructs us by suffering, to suffer with his Affections, leaving us his Example, as the best Lecture of our Duty; His Sufferings concern us not only in point of Merit, but Conformity. We can never enjoy the benefit of his Passion, without following his Patern. His Example is the Rule of the highest Perfection, and we are under the greatest obligation to imitate and honour him who is our Sovereign and Saviour, to whom we owe our Redemption from everlasting Misery, and the Inheritance of Glory. 'Tis the Apostle's advice to the afflicted, *to consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that ye be not wearied, and faint in your minds.* This deduction is with greater force to make us humble and patient; If we consider,

Heb. 12.3.

First; The Infinite Dignity of his Person. He was the Eternal and Only

ly Son of God, and deſcended from the Throne of his Majeſty, diveſted himſelf of his Robes of inſupportable Light, that concealed and manifeſted his Glory to the Angels, and was obedient to the Death of the Croſs. What are the higheſt and beſt of Men to him? Were it not extremely unbecoming and undutiful for a Subject to refuſe Obedience to a juſt Law, if the King that made the Law ſhould voluntarily obſerve it, and reſerve no other advantage to himſelf, but the honour of enacting it? Our Saviour did not ſtand upon the Dignity and Liberty of his Perſon, being equal with God, and our King, but entirely complied with the Law, and ſhall we complain of its Rigor? Pſal. 104.

Secondly; The Greatneſs of his Sufferings. They were incomparable as to their value, ſo in their degrees. He endured the equal Extremities of Infamy and Torment, that are ſo contrary to the Inclinations of Mankind. He was crowned with a cruel Diadem of Thorns, ſcourged, ſpit upon, derided, crucified: Inſenſible Nature,

as if capable of Underſtanding and Affection, was diſordered in its whole Frame at his Death. The Heavens ſympathized in Eclypſes of the Sun, in the darkneſs of the Air at Mid-day, as Midnight; the Earth quak'd with deep Tremblings, and the Rocks were rent aſunder. And the Sufferings of his Soul from the incenſed Juſtice of God were inconceivably great. What is the worſt we ſuffer either immediately from God, or inſtrumentally from Men, to his bitter Paſſion? Our Sufferings are but ſuperficial ſhadows of Miſery, compared to his deep Sorrows.

Thirdly; His Sufferings were moſt undeſerved: For he was the Holy One of God, his Conception without the leaſt taint of Sin, his Life of ſtricteſt Purity, and compleat Obedience to the Divine Law. We may read the Proceſs of our Sins, and underſtand their Guilt in his Paſſion. *He was made ſin for us,* (a Sacrifice to attone the Divine Diſpleaſure) *who knew no ſin.* As *David* when guilty of Adultery and Murder, was fired with diſdain at the relation of an

an incompaſſionate Rich Man, killing the ſingle Lamb of his poor Neighbour, and ſparing his own numerous Flock; and when the Prophet unveiled the Parable, and ſurprized him with that piercing Reproach, *Thou art the man!* he preſently by that Fiction in another, was convinced of his own true guilt, and was extremely afflicted in the ſenſe of it: Thus we are apt to conceive Indignation againſt the Murderers of our Saviour, the Apoſtate Apoſtle, the Malicious Prieſts, the Unrighteous Judge, the Bloody Soldiers: But Conſcience (as a true *Nathan*) may charge us to have been in that wicked Conſpiracy againſt the Lord of Glory, for our ſins condemned and crucified him.

And as our ſins were the impulſive Cauſe of his Sufferings, ſo our Good is the Effect of them. He ſuffered the death of the Croſs, that his Blood might be our Ranſom, his Ignominy the Purchaſe of our Glory, his Torments the Merit our Bleſſedneſs, his Death the Seed of Immortal

Life to us; but we ſuffer the juſt Puniſhment of our own Sins.

Fourthly; His willing Obedience, Divine Patience, and invincible Conſtancy in ſuffering for us. In his diſtreſs, the whole Army of Heaven were in readineſs for his Protection and Reſcue, upon the leaſt ſignification of his Will: *If I prayed to my father, he would ſend me twelve Legions of angels.* Nay, he had the Springs and Keys of the Divine Power in his hands, and could by a Word have deſtroyed his Enemies; but he *freely gave himſelf for us*; and without reſiſtance, without complaint took up his Croſs. Now our Saviour, who had the Fulneſs of the Spirit, communicates to us the firſt Fruits of it, Faith and Love, Humility and Patience, Peace and Joy, to ſupport us under Affliction.

Fifthly; Conſider the excellent Reward of his Sufferings. He was abaſed below Men, and is advanced above all the Angelical Orders, and is the Eternal Argument of their Praiſes: Never were Sufferings ſo grievous, never was Iſſue ſo glorious.

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For the joy that was ſet before him, he endured the croſs, deſpiſed the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Majeſty on high. Now our Bleſſed Saviour hath promiſed, *To him that overcomes, will I grant to ſit with me in my throne, even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father in his throne.* Unfainting Perſeverance in our Duty, ſhall be rewarded with the Glory of our Redeemer. And is not the proſpect and expectation of this ſufficient to confirm our Minds, and make us patiently bear the greateſt Afflictions? Heb. 12.2. Rev. 3.21.

Secondly; The Conſideration of the ſuffering Saints in all Ages, is a powerful Perſuaſive to Patience. Thus the Apoſtle *James* directs Chriſtians, *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have ſpoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of ſuffering affliction, and of patience.* And we have great encouragement from hence, if we conſider, Jam. 5.10.

1. That thoſe who are of moſt precious account with God, and highly favoured by him, are uſually exerciſed

ſed with ſharp Afflictions. The ſingularity and greatneſs of a Calamity exaſperates the Sorrow, when it is apprehended as a ſign of extraordinary Guilt in the afflicted, and of ſevere diſpleaſure in God that ſends it; but to prevent Trouble that ariſeth from that apprehenſion, the Scripture records the heavy Afflictions that happened to God's choſen Servants and Favourites. *Moſes*, whom God honoured with the moſt condeſcending and familiar Diſcoveries of himſelf, was tried by long Afflictions. *David*, a Man after God's own heart, was a long time hurled to and fro by Tempeſtuous Perſecutions from his unjuſt and implacable Enemies. *Iſaiah*, who was dignified with ſuch Heavenly Revelations, that his deſcribing the Sufferings of Chriſt ſeems rather the Hiſtory of an Evangeliſt, than the Viſion of a Prophet, was ſawn aſunder.

2. Their Nature was as frail as ours, their Afflictions as cutting and ſenſible, yet how patiently and couragiouſly did they endure the moſt cruel Sufferings?

3. We

3. We have the ſame bleſſed Comforter to aſſiſt us as they had, the Holy Spirit. He that is ſtiled the Spirit of Power, infuſeth a holy Magnanimity to bear the heavieſt Sufferings. Now it is the Apoſtle's Inference from the Hiſtory of the Saints under the Old Teſtament, ſome of whom died Martyrs, and others lived Martyrs, by their conſtant and generous ſuffering various evils for Divine Truth: *Wherefore ſeeing we are compaſſed about with ſo great a cloud of witneſſes, let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us; and let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us.* The Metaphorical Expreſſion, *a cloud of witneſſes*, imports a numerous Company, and is by ſome of the Ancients interpreted as an alluſion to the Benefit we receive from the Natural Clouds, that refreſh the Air, and skreen us from the ſcorching heat of the Sun. The Alluſion is too ſubtile and ſtrain'd, but the Benefit is real; for the admirable Examples of their Patience and Courage are powerful to refreſh ſorrowful Spirits; *We* Heb. 12. 1.

are

are encompaſſed with them as a Theatre. There is no kind of Affliction, and no part of our Duty, whereof there is not preſented to us ſome Example for our Encouragement and Imitation. It is alſo worthy of Obſervation, that Chriſtians have a ſpecial Obligation, Encouragement, and Aſſiſtance to bear Afflictions with chearful Spirits, above the Believers of the Old Teſtament. For under the *Moſaic* Diſpenſation, outward Proſperity, Riches, Honour, Victory, long Life, were the open expreſſions of God's Favour, promiſed by the terms of that Covenant, as Rewards to Obedience. Yet even then, ſome of the moſt excellent Saints were illuſtrious Examples of patient ſuffering Afflictions. But in the Goſpel God hath declared, that his deſign is to train up his Children by Sufferings, for their future Happineſs, that *through many tribulations they muſt enter into the kingdom of God.* And we find the truth of this by manifold experience, from the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church.

Rev. 7. 9. St. *John*, by Revelation, *beheld a great multitude, which no man could number, of*

of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, that ſtood before the throne, and before the Lamb, cloathed with white robes, and palms in their hands: And they all came out of great tribulation, and had waſhed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Now ſince the Croſs is an Appendix to the Goſpel, we ſhould with more prepared Minds ſubmit to it. Beſides, if Believers then, who enjoyed only *Star-light*, leſs clear diſcoveries of the glorious World to come, were ſo patient and conſtant in ſuffering for the Truth; How much more ſhould we be animated in our Troubles, to whom the *Sun of Righteouſneſs* appears, revealing Life and Immortality by the Goſpel? If they who were partakers of the Holy Spirit in leſſer degrees, were ſupported; ſhould not Chriſtians that receive the Graces of the Spirit in richer abundance, be more comforted?

Thirdly; All Creatures obey the Will of the Creator; all the lower Rank; *Fire and hail, ſnow and vapours, and ſtormy winds fulfil his word.* Pſal. 148. 8. *The Sun ſtood ſtill* till *Joſhua* had compleated

pleated his Victory; *it ſtarted back* to confirm the Faith of *Hezekiah*. Nay, ſenſible Creatures will contradict their own Natures at God's Command. The Ravens fed *Elias*, and the Lions ſpared *Daniel*. And Creatures of the ſuperior Order exactly fulfil his Will. *The angels that excel in ſtrength, do his commandments: hearkning to the voice of his word.* They do not uſurp upon his Royalty, nor make uſe of their Power to deny ſubjection to his Pleaſure. Now if the Inferior Creatures, who are under leſs Obligations, and cannot underſtand their Duty; if Superior Creatures that excel us in Nobility of Nature, and Dignity of State, perfectly obey God; ſhould not their Example ſtrongly incite us to ſubmit to his Will?

Pſal. 103.

Fourthly; It is our moſt glorious Perfection, to have our Wills united to the Divine Will. In Heaven Grace is in its exaltation, the Spirits of Juſt Men are made perfect by their Compliance with the Divine Will that abſolutely governs there. A private Will that compounds with God upon

on ſordid Capitulations, that excepts againſt doing or ſuffering what is diſtaſteful and harſh to the carnal part, How unreaſonable, how degenerous and baſe is it? But when the Will is obedient, enlarged, and uniform with God, 'tis enobled. If our ſlow-pac'd Thoughts could conceive things as eaſily, ſuddenly and clearly as the Angels do, our Minds would be in the higheſt Elevation: And is it not a more valuable and deſirable Perfection to will as God does, than to underſtand as the Angels?

Hic eſt magnus animus qui ſe Deo tradidit. Senec.

Beſides, Patience has a ſpecial Eminence above other Graces, and advances a Chriſtian to the higheſt Honour and Perfection that is attainable here. All Graces are of the ſame Divine Extraction, and have the ſame general effect upon the Soul: They come from God, and produce a God-like Temper and Diſpoſition: But they are diſtinguiſh'd by their Objects and Operations: Some are Heroick, exercis'd about great things, and produce more Noble Actions: Others are humble, and converſant in meaner things, and their Operations

ons are leſs eminent. As amongſt the Birds, the Eagles fly aloft, and only ſtoop for a great Prey: The Bees fly from Flower to Flower, and extract a Little Dew, but 'tis all Honey. It is the Counſel of St. *James* to the afflicted, *Let patience have her perfect work*, in bearing Afflictions, though heavy and continued, *that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* A ſingular Perfection and Encomium is attributed to Patience, in that the trial and exerciſe of it is the moſt difficult part of our Duty, and without it we can neither obey the Commands, nor obtain the Promiſes of the Goſpel. *Patience* is the trueſt *Fortitude*, and draws forth other Divine Graces in their excellent activity. What the temper is to material Weapons that are blunted or broken in the Combat without it, Patience is to other Graces, their ſtrength is derived from it. This was the moſt glorious Perfection of Chriſt's Obedience; *For it became him for whom* Heb. 2. *are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many ſons to glory, to make the captain of their ſalvation perfect*

perfect through ſufferings. Patience is not only defenſive Armour, but has noble Operations. When our Saviour was nailed to the Croſs, and was the Mark wherein all the poiſoned Arrows of Rage and Malice were received, he ſeemed only to *Suffer*, yet even then performed the moſt *divine Exploits*, and obtained the moſt glorious Victory; he reconciled God, diſarm'd the Law, ſubdued Satan, broke the Gates of Hell, deſtroyed Death, and reſcued us miſerable forlorn Captives. Upon this account *Chryſoſtom* breaks forth in rapturous Expreſſions, That our Saviour ſuffering on the Croſs, was more Glorious than in his Creating the World. Thus the Patience of a Chriſtian, which in appearance is only a quiet bearing Affliction from God, yet produceth many bleſſed effects: A Believer, while he feels the weight of *God's Hand*, unceſſantly ſeeks his *Face* with the moſt ardent Affections. He doth not murmur againſt the Diſpleaſure of God, but mourns bitterly that he hath deſerved it. He ſurrenders himſelf to the Divine Pleaſure, which is the pureſt Act of Obedience. He

ſubdues his unruly Paſſions, which is a more noble Victory than the Atchievements of the moſt celebrated Conquerors. 'Tis true, the power of Grace is very conſpicuous in reſiſting pleaſant Temptations, the pernicious attractives of the Senſes and carnal Appetites; but more in the Battels of Patience, by how much 'tis more eaſy to Nature to be content without unneceſſary and ſuperficial Pleaſures, than to endure oppreſſing and painful Evils. I will produce an inſtance in both kinds, recorded in Scripture, for the Veneration and Imitation of all. The firſt is that of *Joſeph*, whoſe unſpotted Chaſtity was diſcovered by rejecting the impure deſires of his Maſter's Wife. Three powerful Tempters join'd to draw his Conſent, Solitude, Youth, and Solicitation; Solitude with its Silence, is often more perſuaſive to the commiſſion of Sin than the ſtrongeſt Eloquence; becauſe there being none that ſees, takes away the ſhame of being ſeen in guilty and foul Actions. Youth is violent in its Appetites, and needs no intreaties to induce it to gratify them: The Senſual Fancy reigns, and

and has ſuch a raviſhing power upon the Will, that to corrupt Nature the Temptation is irreſiſtible, and without Divine Strength, an inſtance of overcoming it, would be as rare as a *Phœnix* in the World. Beſides, *Joſeph* was her Slave, and was tempted by Intreaties mix'd with Inticements from a Superior, that (like a Bow that draws Strength from its bending) by making a ſhow of ſubjection acquires a double Empire. But he had a Reverence of his inviſible Obſerver and Judge: *How ſhall I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* Now that *Joſeph* in the Flower of his Age, was not emboldened by Solitude, nor excited by Concupiſcence, nor poiſoned by the breath of the Baſilisk, was an admirable effect of Divine Grace. He preſerved his ſincere and conſtant Innocence, as the Sun its undefiled luſtre in the midſt of all the feculent exhalations that aſcend from the Earth.

The other Inſtance is *Job*, whoſe Victorious Grace in the compariſon, is more glorious than that of *Joſeph*; for as the lapſes of thoſe who by Terrors and Torments violate the Law, are

leſs culpable, and more excuſable, than of thoſe who by Senſual Allurements tranſgreſs the Divine Commands, the Human Nature being capable of ſuch dolorous impreſſions as infinitely exceed all the Pleaſures of Senſe; and conſequently the yielding from fear of vehement pains and extreme evils, is leſs voluntary than what proceeds from the Love of Delights; ſo proportionably that Virtue is more eminent that remains firm, and preſerves us in our Duty, notwithſtanding the Batteries of extream Evils, than that which preſerves us by flight from the deceitful ſenſitive good.

Mille placer non vagl ono un tormento.

The Holy Ghoſt has given us a particular Narrative of *Job*'s Troubles, and his behaviour under them: The loſs of a great Eſtate was but a preparative for worſe Calamities; his Ten Children were all deſtroyed in a day; his Body was covered with Ulcers; his Wife, that in this deſolate Condition was only left to alleviate his Sorrows, unſpeakably increas'd them; yet under this heavy weight of Miſeries, he did not expreſs one unbecoming complaint. His Patience exceeded all

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the Pains of his Body, and Griefs of his Mind. Who loves God ſo ardently in his Proſperity as he did in his Afflictions? Like Flaming Torches, that reverſt, the Flame aſcends with more force to Heaven. St. *Auſtin* admiring his Invincible Temper, ſays, that *Job* half dead on the Dunghil, was ſtronger than *Adam*, when Immortal in Paradiſe; for with Indignation he repuls'd his Wife, who was Satan's Inſtrument to tempt him to Deſpair and Blaſphemy. How graceful and amiable a Spectacle is a patient Saint? He attracts the Eye and Heart of God himſelf. What an honourable Teſtimony proceeded from his Mouth, concerning *Job*, to vindicate his Sincerity from the malice of the Accuſer? *Haſt thou ſeen my ſervant Job, that there is none like him on the earth?* Unparallel'd Saint! who endured ſuch a ſucceſſion of Tragical Events with humility and ſubmiſſion! The active holineſs of his Proſperous Life, is not recorded with that Note of eminency and admiration, as his Patient Sufferings, for which he is univerſally Crowned with the Praiſes of the Saints in all Ages. *Ye have* Job 2. 3.

heard of the patience of Job! He is a ſpectacle that draws the regards of all, more famous for his Patience than his Miſery. 'Tis the ſaying of the *Platonick* Philoſopher, Take away from the Life of *Hercules*, the Tyrants he ſuppreſs'd, and the fierce Beaſts he ſlew, his Travels and Combats wherein his Courage was exerciſed and appear'd, and you leſſen his Virtue, the Hero is loſt: He that in the Opinion of the Heathen World deſerved a Deity, and is crowned with Stars in Heaven, will not have a ſpark of Glory on Earth to preſerve his Fame alive in Memory. Thus, take away from *Job* the *Chaldean* and *Sabean* Robbers, the ſhower of Fire that conſumed his Eſtate, the Whirlwind raiſed by infernal Spirits, that deſtroyed his Children, his Diſeaſes, and his cruel Wife, the exerciſes of his inſuperable Patience; and the honourable remembrance of *Job* is loſt. If the Prince of Darkneſs had not tried all his Arts and Strength to overcome him, and had not been foiled in his Attempts, his Graces had not been ſo illuſtrious. St. *Peter* declares, *That the*

ſpirit

ſpirit of glory, and of God, reſts upon ſuffering Chriſtians. They are the Temples of the Holy Spirit, the Eternal Deity, wherein he diſplays his Divine Virtue and glorious Power. In ſhort, God uſually conducts his People to the ſublimeſt degrees of Grace and Glory by Suffering; the more they are tried and refined, the brighter their Crown will be.

5. 'Tis our Felicity quietly to reſign our Wills to the Bleſſed Will of God. Patience, conſidered as a Moral Virtue, frees us from many Sorrows and vexations that are ſupervenient to an Affliction, and are cauſed meerly from the Diſtemper, and unquiet diſorderly agitations of our own Paſſions. Nature inſtructs a Dog by licking his Wound to heal it, a lively Emblem of the healing operation of diſcreet Patience to the afflicted Spirit. Patience lines the Yoke, and makes it ſofter and more eaſy to us. Beſides, an humble and full Submiſſion to the Will of God, as the Rule of Goodneſs, brings down the Peace and Joy of Paradiſe into our Souls. The glorified Saints

are raiſed above all Diſaſters and Troubles; nothing can diſturb the ſerenity, or ſtain the purity of their ſtate. From this Principle of Perfection and Felicity, that God's Will is always accompliſhed, to which their Wills are entirely ſubordinate, in obedience to his Authority, and by their proper inclination. As the Waters which in the Creation God tranſported above the Heavens, are not moved as thoſe here below by the furious agitation of the Winds, but as if they were of a Celeſtial nature, have the ſame regular motion with the Heavens. The Angels, whoſe Zeal for the Honour of God, and Love to the Souls of Men is incomparable, yet they ſee the Rebellion of his Subjects, whereby his Glory is obſcured, and the final deſtruction of Rebellious Sinners, without the leaſt diminution of their Felicity, becauſe they always acquieſce in the Divine Will, that orders all things for the beſt end. And ſo far as our Wills are complying with the Divine Will, we enjoy a tranquillity of Mind, which afflictive accidents cannot diſquiet. *Auguſtin* deſcribes Bleſſedneſs to conſiſt in

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the accomplishment of our desires, and in having only regular Desires: Now a Saint whose Will is absolutely resigned to God's Will, has a foretaste of Blessedness here; for whatsoever happens to him here, is from God's Will that approves or permits it, and herein he finds satisfaction. What a pure undisturbed Pleasure springs from this Consideration, that the Wisdom and Love of God chuseth always what is best for us? This will make us contented in every state; even when our Condition is not correspondent with our natural Desires, our Desires are graciously accorded with our Condition. What expensive Industry has been used to procure the fancied *Philosopher's Stone*, that changes all Metals into Gold, which if obtained cannot make us happy? For as the natural heat of the Body does not proceed from the Cloaths, but from the Body that warms them: We see Persons in the fit of an Ague shake with cold, though covered with Furs: So true Felicity doth not proceed from the outward Condition, but from the Temper of the Mind. The Rich often want Content in the con-

fluence

fluence of all things, and are often disquieted with the fears of losing their Possessions. But Acquiescence in the Divine Disposal always brings satisfaction to the Soul. 'Tis an inviolable Treasure that cannot by the most violent Evils be taken from us.

I shall annex Two Considerations more, to shew how our Felicity is promoted by our patient Sufferings.

First; 'Tis a blessed Assurance of our *Election* by the most free and unchangeable Love of God. The Apostle tells afflicted Christians, *That whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren.* If we suffer with his Divine Patience, with his humble and holy Affections, 'tis a clear and certain evidence that we are appointed to Reign with him. If we bear the Image of our suffering Saviour in our earthly State, we shall bear his glorious Image in the Heavenly. The well-grounded Hope of this is very comfortable in the greatest Afflictions, and will encourage us to persevere in humble

Rom. 8. 29.

ble ſufferings. For if his Sovereign Pleaſure has ordained us to Eternal Life, how juſt is it that we ſhould with an entire and reſigned ſubmiſſion yield up our ſelves to the Conduct of his Wiſdom, as to the ways by which we ſhall obtain it?

Secondly; By a Filial Submiſſion to God's Chaſtiſements, we have a bleſſed Teſtimony of our *Adoption*. 'Tis the Apoſtle's comfortable Inference, *If ye endure chaſtiſements, God dealeth with you as with ſons*; that is, if without murmuring or fainting, if with that reſpect and ſubjection that is due to the high and holy Providence of God, then we may be aſſured of his Paternal Relation to us, and *his Rod comforts us*, as the ſtrokes of it are an Argument of his care and love to us. From hence proceeds inexpreſſible and peculiar Conſolation to afflicted Chriſtians: The ſame Affliction as to the matter and circumſtances, may be upon humble meek Sufferers, and refractory ſtubborn Sinners, *that kick againſt the pricks*, but are diſtinguiſhed by the intention of God. They are ſent to

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the Humble, as Corrections from the wise Love of a Father, who dearly regards their Souls; to the Obdurate, as Vengeance from the righteous Severity of a Judge. Upon the humble they fall as soft as a shower of *Snow*; upon the other as the storm of *fiery Hail* upon the *Egyptians*; and the Issue of them is as different as Heaven and Hell.

Lastly; This sharp Discipline continues but during our *Minority* here; when we arrive at the state of Perfection we shall not need it: And this Life is but a short transition to the next World. What comparison is there between a few Years, and the Volume of Eternal Ages? 'Tis the Consolatory of the Apostle, *The time is short, let those that weep be as if they wept not.* Within a little while afflicted Saints shall ascend to the Region of Blessedness, and no Cloud of Sorrow, no Shadow of Fear, no Darkness of Anxiety, can reach so high to darken and disturb their Felicity: *Weeping can endure but for a night, and joy comes in the morning* of the everlasting Day. *For a moment have*

Isa. 5.

I hid

I hid my face from thee, but with everlaſting kindneſs will I receive thee, ſaith the Lord. Death is the laſt ſtep out of Mortality and Miſery. *Be ye alſo patient, ſtabliſh your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draws nigh.* Jam. 5.

Secondly; To theſe Motives I ſhall add ſome Directions for the Performance of this hard Duty.

Direct. 1. A ſtedfaſt Faith in the Divine Providence and Promiſes, will compoſe the Soul to a quiet ſubmiſſion to God's Pleaſure in the ſharpeſt Troubles.

All things are under the intimate Inſpection, the wiſe Conduct, the powerful Influence of his Providence. This is one of thoſe prime, univerſal, rich Truths, from whence ſo many practical Conſequences are derived. By virtue of it we may infallibly conclude, that all things that come to paſs, are diſpoſed in the beſt ſeaſon, and beſt manner, for the beſt ends. If we were admitted to the Council of State above, and underſtood the immediate reaſons of every particular De-

Decree, we could not be more infallibly assur'd of the Wisdom and Goodness, the Rectitude and Equity of his Dispensations, than by this universal Principle, that is applicable to all Events, as Light to every Colour, That what God appoints is best. That we may feel the blessed Influence of it more effectually, let us consider that Divine Providence extends to the whole Creation: 'Tis Infinite, and over-ruling all things. God is pleased to represent it in Scripture, according to the narrowness of
2 Kings 4. our Capacity: As *Elisha* contracted himself to the stature of the *Shunamite*'s Child, applying his Mouth to his Mouth, and his Hands to his Hands. Thus 'tis said, *He rides upon the heavens*, to signify his absolute Power in ordering all the motions of the most high, vast, and glorious part of the visible Universe. *He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.* The Stars are the brightest and most active parts of the vast Region above us, and are called the Host of Heaven, with respect to their Number and Order.

der. God is their General; and though they seem innumerable to our Senses, yet the multitude is exactly known to him, and yields ready and entire Obedience to his Pleasure. From whence the Psalmist infers, *Great is the Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite.* Psal. 147. 5.

There is nothing in the lower World exempted from the Empire and Activity of God's Providence. He is unmoveable, and moves all; invisible, yet appears in all. The most casual things are not without his Guidance. *A man drew a bow at a venture*, without express Aim, but God directed the Arrow through the Joints of *Ahab*'s Armour, that penetrated to the Springs of Life. The minutest and least considerable things are ordered by him. A Sparrow does not fly or fall without his disposal. 'Tis not an Hyperbolical Expression of our Saviour, but an absolute Truth, *That all the hairs of our head are numbred, and not one falls to the ground without his license.* The voluntary and most indetermin'd Causes of things are under his Conduct. The hearts of Men, 1 Kings 22. 34. Mat. 10.

even

even of Kings that are most absolute and unconfin'd, are in the Hand of the Lord, he turns them according to his Pleasure; as the Streams of Water are by several Trenches conveyed to refresh a Garden, by the skilful Husbandman.

Sin, that is the most disorderly thing in the world, is not only within the compass of his Permission, but is limited and disposed by his Providence: And such is his Goodness, that he would not permit it, if his Power could not over-rule that Evil, for a Good that preponderates the Evil. And all afflictive Evils, by his own Declaration, are the effects of his just and powerful Providence. *Is there any evil in the city, and I have not done it?* His Providence is comprehensive and compleat; no unforeseen Accidents in the freest and most contingent things, no unvoluntary obstruction in the most necessary things, can break the entireness, or discompose the order of his Providence. *The Lord is in heaven, he doth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and all the deep places.*

ces. How exactly and eaſily does he manage and over-rule all things? The whole World is his Houſe, and all the ſucceſſive Generations of Men his Family; ſome are his Sons, and by voluntary ſubjection; others his Slaves, and by juſt conſtraint fulfil his Pleaſure. 'Twas the Saying of a Wiſe King, inſtructed by Experience, That the Art of Government was like the laborious Travel of a Weaver, that requires the attention of the Mind, and the activity of the Body; the Eyes, Hands, and Feet, are all in exerciſe: And how often is the contexture of Human Counſels, though woven with great care, yet unexpectedly broke? So many croſs Accidents interpoſe, ſo many Emergencies beyond all prevention ſtart up, that fruſtrate the deſigns and hopes of the moſt Potent Rulers of this World. But God diſpoſes all things with more facility than one of us can move a grain of Sand: The Government of the World has a leſs proportion to his Infinite Wiſdom and uncontroulable Power, than a grain of Sand hath to the ſtrength of a Man. His Coun-

ſel ſhall always ſtand; all ſecond Cauſes depend upon him in their Beings, their Agency and Influences. Nothing is executed in this viſible Kingdom below, but by expreſs Order from his inviſible Court; and all Occurrences are made uſe of for the accompliſhing the deſigns of his electing Mercy, in the glorification of his Saints. Now all that is comfortable and reviving, is contained in this Principle. If his Providence reaches to the Birds of the Air, and the Lillies of the Field, much more to the Saints, in whom he hath a Propriety; and ſuch is his condeſcending Love, and inconceivable Benignity, that he ſtiles himſelf by the moſt endearing Relation, *Their God.* They are the prime part of his vigilant care. 'Tis St. *Auſtin*'s affectionate ejaculation, *O Omnipotent Goodneſs, that ſo particularly regardeſt every one of us, as if the ſole Objects of thy tender care, and all of us as ſingle perſons!* The Sun applies its quickening Influences for the production and growth of a ſingle Plant as particularly as if there were no other things in the World to receive them; yet

O bone omnipotens, qui ſic unumquemque noſtrum tanquam ſolum curas, & ſic omnes tanquam ſingulos! Aug. Conf. lib. 13.

yet at the ſame time it paſſes from Sign to Sign in the Heavens, changes the Scenes of the Elements, produces new Seaſons, and its active and prolifick heat forms and transforms whatſoever is changed in Nature. This is a fit reſemblance of the univerſal and ſpecial operations of Divine Providence; what a ſtrong ſecurity doth this give to a Chriſtian in the midſt of all Trouble in this corrupt and changeable World? How will it clear the mind from thoſe miſerable perplexities, and quiet thoſe improvident, precipitant Paſſions that ſo often afflict the afflicted? Whatever Evils befal the Saints, are with the Knowledg, the Will, and by the Efficiency of God, materially conſidered; and is he defective in Wiſdom, Power, or Goodneſs, that what he does, either might or ought to be better otherwiſe? Indeed, ſometimes the ſpecial ends of his Afflicting Providence are in ſuch deep obſcurity, that our Line is too ſhort to fathom, and the manner how Good ſhall reſult from Evil is unknown; but then we may conclude with evidence, 'tis for the beſt. When *Cæſarius* a Pri-

mitive Saint was arguing in himself, how that Scripture could be true, That the Earth was founded on the Waters; how the more weighty Element should not sink, and be overwhelmed by the other: He stopp'd the course of his Thoughts by this reflection, *I forgat my self when I said to God, How can this be?* And admires that which he could not comprehend. For inferior reasons we often pray, that particular Evils that are near, may be prevented; but if they overtake us, we may be satisfied that they are appointed by his Supreme Reason and Everlasting Counsel. As in a Consort of Musick, the parts are not formed when they are sung, but were composed before by the skill of the Musician, and every part assign'd convenient to the Voices of the Persons. Thus the various conditions and passages of our lives were so disposed by the Sovereign Wisdom of God from Eternity, and as most fit for us. Whether the Evils proceed more immediately and entirely from his hand, or by the intercurrence of second causes; 'tis equally certain they come by the determinate Counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Dial. 1.

God. Our Saviour anſwers *Pilate*, *Thou couldſt have no power at all againſt me, except it were given thee from above.* All the afflictive Evils that proceed from the malice of Men, and increaſe their Guilt and Judgment, are ordered by his Providence, for the Spiritual and Eternal Good of his People; this conſideration will prevent much Sin and Trouble that the beſt Men are liable to in their perturbations and paſſions. There is nothing more exaſperates an afflicted Mind than the apprehenſion that one unjuſtly ſuffers,

Leniter ex merito quicquid patiare ferendum eſt:
—— Quæ venit indignè pœna dolenda venit.

A righteous puniſhment even Nature conſents is to be received with meek ſubmiſſion; but to be patient under unjuſt Perſecutions, not to be provok'd by Injuries and Enemies, is one of the hardeſt things in the World. If by a flaſh of Lightning, or by a ſhower of Rain, we are blaſted or wet, we endure it patiently; but if one throw

Wild-fire or Water on us, we reſent the indignity with Anger and Vexation. Now, if we in our deliberate Thoughts conſider, that God not only permits, but ſends all the Evils we moſt unworthily ſuffer from Men, and that he commands our quiet, humble behaviour under them, nay, that he will over-rule all ſo as the iſſue ſhall be bleſſed, what tranquility and acquieſcence will it produce in the ſharpeſt Diſpenſations of his Providence? But on the contrary, exclude Providence out of the World, and the Mind is involved in Darkneſs with all its Terrors. Atheiſm is the Gulf of Impiety and Infelicity. *None ſays, where is God, my maker, that gives ſongs in the night*, that converts Poiſons into Remedies, the ſaddeſt Evils into means of the beſt Good, and our Afflictions into Conſolations. He that lives without God in the World, if he loſeth what he ſuperlatively loves, or falls under an incurable Evil, has no other remedy but a reſolution to endure it as well as he can: And he is extremely miſerable that has no Joy here, nor hopes of it hereafter, not the en-

encouragement of a happy Iſſue to bear it patiently.

In conjunction with the belief of God's Providence, our belief of his Promiſes, that his Truth is unchangeable, for the performance of them, is requiſite to preſerve the afflicted Spirit in a calm and ſubmiſſive ſtate. A preſent Evil ſtrikes the imagination and ſenſes in another manner than a future Spiritual Good. Now *Faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for*, &c. it makes inviſible things to be the greateſt realities to the Soul; the ſteady reliance upon the Divine Attributes engaged them to fulfil his Promiſes, and is of an invincible efficacy to ſtrengthen the Soul in every diſtreſs. *O Lord of Hoſts, bleſſed is the man that truſteth in thee.* His uncontroulable power Governs all the Orders of Creatures, and the Honour of his Truth is ſo Sacred, *That heaven and earth ſhall paſs away without the failing of any good thing promiſed to his people.* Faith aſſiſts Patience; as the Blood that is a natural Balſam, flows to the wounded part to heal and conſolidate it. Theſe Graces are inſeparable, and are recorded with

Heb. 11. 1.

Pſal. 84.

ſpecial obſervation, as the Fountains of Courage under Sufferings. *Here is the faith and patience of the ſaints; and we are directed to follow them who through faith and patience have inherited the promiſes.* Other Graces are engaged in the Chriſtian Combat, and ſtrive for Victory, but Faith and Patience are Crowned. And to ſupport us in great Troubles, a firm affiance in the Divine Promiſes as belonging to us, is of infinite Moment. *I will greatly rejoice, and truſt in the Lord, my ſoul ſhall be joyful in my God.* The general apprehenſion of God's Mercy is ineffectual to ſupport us: And to claim a Title in him without a real Evidence, is vain. But a regular Truſt, an applicative Faith, in conjunction with our ſincere performing the Conditions of the Promiſes, is to a Chriſtian, like the ſacred locks of *Sampſon*'s hair, whilſt they remained, he was invincible; but when cut off, he became weak as other Men. Our Comforts riſe and fall according to the ſtronger or weaker degrees of our Faith: *Peter* walked firm upon the Waves till he doubted, and then began to ſink. One

Rev. 13. 10.

Iſa. 61. 10.

of

of the ſoreſt and moſt dangerous Temptations of the afflicted is, that they are out of God's Favour. The Mourning Veil darkens the eyes of their Minds, that they cannot ſee his compaſſionate Countenance, they cannot reconcile his Gracious Promiſes with his Providential Diſpenſations; the good things he hath prepared for hereafter, with the evils he ſends here. As *Gideon* complained to the Angel, *If God be with us, how comes all this evil to us?* And the Spirit of Darkneſs takes the advantage of great troubles to tempt ſad Souls to deſpondency, as if they were utterly forſaken of God. If this Temptation prevail, *if the heavens be as braſs, and the earth as iron*; if no Influences deſcend from above, and there be no Springs below; if Divine and Human Comforts fail, there remains nothing but deſperate Sorrow. St. *Auſtin*, to repel this temptation, introduceth God anſwering the afflicted and diſcomforted; *Is this thy Faith? Did I promiſe Temporal Proſperity to you? Were you made a Chriſtian for this, that you might flouriſh in this World?* The Faith of our Adoption is

Reſpondet tibi Deus, Haccine eſt fides tua? hæc tibi promiſi? ad hæc Chriſtianus factus es ut in Seculo floreres?

is confirmed by his Corrections. If they are profitable to us, if we are refined, not harden'd by the Fiery Trial, we have a clear teſtimony of our Intereſt in him. *I will bring them through the fire, and they ſhall be refined as ſilver and gold is tried; and they ſhall ſay, The Lord is my God.*

Zech. 13.

Briefly, Let us ſtrengthen our Faith of the glorious State, and our Title to it, and it will make us firm againſt all the violent Impreſſions of Adverſity; it will produce a joyful exultation even in the afflicted State. The Chriſtian that with ſtedfaſt Faith and attentive Conſideration looks on the ineſtimable infinite Felicity, is regardleſs of all things in the World, in compariſon with it. Sacred Hiſtory reports of *Saul* the Perſecutor, who was transformed into an Apoſtle, That a ſudden Light from Heaven of that exceſſive brightneſs encompaſſed him, that he was ſtruck blind, and ſaw no man: This may be eaſily and juſtly applied to every ſincere Believer in a moral ſenſe: The firſt effect of the ſpiritual Light that ſhines in the eyes of his Mind, and diſcovers unſeen eternal

eternal things, is to darken his ſight of the things that are temporal: Even the greateſt things here are not of ſuch moment, as to allure or terrify him from proſecuting his bleſſed End. St. *Peter* declares of perſecuted Chriſtians, *That believing, they rejoice with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.* The Martyrs dearly embraced the Croſs of Chriſt, and prized the Thorns of his Crown, more than all the Roſes of Pleaſure, than all the Diadems of earthly Dignity, in *expectation* of the bleſſed *Reward.* *Tertullian* wrote to the Noble Confeſſors of Chriſt that were impriſoned in *Africa*, *How willingly would we change our Proſperity with your precious Miſeries?* If weak Nature be ſenſible of your hard Reſtraint and Sufferings, take flight by your Thoughts to Paradiſe. The Perſecutors cannot lay Fetters upon your Spirits, but when you pleaſe you may aſcend to the Kingdom of God, where you ſhall reign for ever. In the mean time counterpoize the Darkneſs and Straitneſs, the Loathſomneſs and Sufferings of your Priſon, with the Light and Amplitude, the Riches and Abundance,

1 Pet. 1.8.

Omnia Spiritui patent vagare ſpiritu, ſpatiare ſpiritu. Nihil crus ſentit in nervo cum animus in cælo eſt. Ad Martyr.

dance, the Joy and Glory of the Celeſtial Kingdom, which no words are ſignificant enough, or worthy to expreſs. A Saint whoſe Bleſſedneſs is in Heaven, cannot be made utterly unhappy by Afflictions on Earth. He will ſerve God with as much Love and as good a Will, when poor, deſpiſed, diſconſolate, as in a flouriſhing condition; and with this peculiar ſatisfaction, that his Sincerity is then moſt evident: For the ſervice that is without reſpect to a preſent Salary, a temporal Intereſt, is not baſe and mercenary. Beſides, that Obedience is more eminent and acceptable that is with Sufferings, and the Reward ſhall be anſwerable to our Obedience. One Draught of the River that makes glad the City of God above, can ſweeten all the bitterneſs of the world. In ſhort, the Chriſtians Hope is in the Apoſtle's expreſſion, *The anchor of the ſoul ſure and ſtedfaſt, that enters within the veil*; it is faſten'd in Heaven, confirmed by the Fidelity of God's Promiſes, and the prevailing Interceſſion of Chriſt, and ſecured to us in the midſt of all the turbulent Agitations in the wide Sea below. Hope makes us

Nullus iis dolor eſt de incurſatione malorum præſentium, quibus fiducia eſt futurorum bonorum. Quid hoc ad Chriſtianos quid ad Dei Servos? quos Paradiſus invitat, quos gratia omnis & copia Regni cæleſtis expectat? Cypr. *cont.* Demet.

us not only patient but joyful in all our Sufferings. A Chriſtian encouraged by the bleſſed Hope, comes with Joy to Death, as the Door that opens to the Kingdom of Glory, and immortal Bleſſedneſs.

Direct. 2. Let God be the ſupream Object of our eſteem and affections; and whatſoever evils we ſuſtain, will be made light and eaſy to us. The Apoſtle aſſures us, *That all things*, even the moſt afflicting, *work for the good of thoſe that love God.* That heavenly Affection is not only the Condition that entitles us to that Promiſe, that by ſpecial Privilege makes all the evils of this world advantagious to the Saints; but 'tis the Qualification by which 'tis accompliſhed. By Love we enjoy God, and Love will make us willing to do or ſuffer what he pleaſeth, that we may have fuller Communion with him. In God all Perfections are in tranſcendent eminence, they are always the ſame, and always new. He gives all things without any diminution of his Treaſures: He receives the Praiſes and Services of the Angels, without any advantage

Rom. 8. 28.

vantage or increaſe of his Felicity. By poſſeſſing him, all that is amiable and excellent in the Creatures, may be enjoyed in a manner incomparably better than in the Creatures themſelves. His Infinite Goodneſs can ſupply all our wants, ſatisfy all our deſires, allay all our ſorrows, conquer all our fears. One Beam of his Countenance can *revive the ſpirit dead in ſorrow*, and *buried in deſpair*. The Prophet *Jeremy* in the deſolation of his Countrey, ſupports himſelf with his Intereſt in God:

Lam 3.24. *The Lord is my portion, ſaith my ſoul.* The expreſſion ſignifies the truth and ſtrength of his affectionate choice of God as his chiefeſt Good. What loſs can make a Chriſtian poor, whoſe Treaſure is above? What danger anxious, whoſe heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord? What diſaſter unhappy, whoſe Bleſſedneſs is in Heaven? What Death can deſtroy him, whoſe Life *is hid with Chriſt in God?* Deprive him of all the contents of this world, yet by Communion with God, Heaven deſcends to him, or he aſcends to Heaven, where God is all in all: The bleſſed Reward is not reſerved wholly till hereafter.

Divine

Divine Joy is not deferred till our entrance into the Celeſtial Kingdom: There 'tis a refined Joy from all mixture of Sorrow; 'tis infinitely increaſed; there ſpiritual Joy meets eternal Joy; but it begins here: The gracious Soul has a taſte and ſight *how good the Lord is*, as an earneſt of the fulneſs of Joy in Heaven. Hope brings ſome Leaves of the Tree of Life, to refreſh us with their fragrancy; but Love, of its Fruits to ſtrengthen us. As tranſplanted Fruits, where the Soil is defective, and the Sun leſs favourable, are not of that Beauty and Goodneſs as in their Original Country; ſo Heavenly Joys in this Life are inferior in their degree to thoſe of the bleſſed above, but they are very reviving. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my ſoul.* Pſal. 94. 19. 'Tis the triumphant Exultation of the Prophet; *Although the figtree ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive ſhall fail, and the fields ſhall yield no meat, the flock ſhall be cut off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation.* Hab. 3. 17, 18.

tion. He ſuppoſeth himſelf in extremity, utterly deſtitute not only of the Refreſhments, but Supports of Life; yet he knows how not only to be patient and contented, but joyful in the moſt forlorn Condition. Joy is an Affection proper to the happy ſtate. *In the day of proſperity rejoice.* And in his deepeſt Affliction he had ſuch a Felicity in the Favour of God, that no external want could diminiſh. The Tree of Life brought forth Fruits for every Month; our bleſſed Redeemer, typified by it, has Conſolations for the moſt deplorable and deſolate Condition. If he ſays to the afflicted Soul, I am thy Salvation, and within a little while thou ſhalt be with me for ever in Glory, it ſufficeth. *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I ſay, rejoice.* It is the moſt affectionate Counſel of the Apoſtle. Theſe are not inacceſſible heights of Religion, and Points of Perfection, to which none can arrive, unleſs extraordinary Saints; but are the experimental Practice of humble ſincere Chriſtians, that ſay with the Pſalmiſt, *Whom have we in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth we deſire beſides thee.* The guilty principle of

of vexatious diſcontents and immoderate griefs under outward loſſes and troubles, is a falſe Judgment; that God without the World is not ſufficient for our compleat Felicity: Who, unleſs a Perſon diſtracted and fooliſh, would ſay that the magnificent Feaſt of *Ahaſuerus*, that was prepared to ſhew the Riches and Glory of his Kingdom, was mean and poor, becauſe there was not ſet before the numerous Gueſts in Diſhes of Gold, Graſs and Acorns, the Food of Brutes? 'Tis equal folly to imagine that God, who is an infinite Good, ſuitable to the ſpiritual immortal Nature of the Soul, and All-ſufficient to fill the vaſt capacity and deſires of our Angelical Faculties, the Underſtanding and Will, by his glorious Perfections; that God, I ſay, cannot make us happy in his Love, becauſe our lower Animal Faculties, our Senſes, have not in our Communion with him what is pleaſing to their carnal Appetites. The *Spouſe* in the *Canticles* is repreſented as a *Lilly among Thorns*, encompaſs'd and oppreſs'd with injurious Enemies, yet ſhe breaks forth in triumphant Joy, *I am my beloved's, and he is mine*; by an ir-

revocable donation she gave her Heart to Christ, and reciprocally he gave himself to her; she despised all inferior things, and rested in his Love as her sole Felicity. In short, none are concerned to lose the weak light of a Candle at Noon day, when the Sun pours forth a deluge of Light to illustrate all things; and the Soul that enjoys the propitious Presence of God, is satisfied therewith when lower Comforts fail.

Direct. 3. Let us moderate our Valuations and Affections to things below.

This is a Consequence of the former; for if the heart be full of God, it will not admit any inferior Object to rival him in his Throne. If we consider the vast distance between the Perfections of the Creator, and the faint Reflections of them in the Creature, our Respects and Love should be accordingly. Reason, Authority, Example, Experience, convince us that all things below are empty Vanities: It is restless folly to seek for Happiness here, and, to borrow the Language of the Angel, *to seek the living among the dead.*

If

If our Felicity be from the Light and Warmth of Creatures, how eaſily is it quenched, and we are in irrecoverable Darkneſs? When there is exorbitant Love, and diſſolute Joy in the poſſeſſing, there will be extream and deſperate Sorrow in loſing. One irregular Paſſion feeds and maintains another. The heart is diſpoſed to contrary Extremities, and paſſes from the Fire to the Froſt: The unequal Spirit ſwells or ſinks, according to the outward Condition. It is the wiſe advice of the Apoſtle, *that we rejoice as if we rejoiced not*, and then *we ſhall weep as if we wept not.* Afflictions are intolerable or light, according to our apprehenſion of them; an indifferency of temper to the things of this world, diſpoſeth to Self-denial univerſally, as God is pleaſed to try us. This was the holy and happy temper of *David, Surely I behaved and quieted my ſelf as a child that is weaned of his mother, my ſoul is even as a weaned child*: Indifferent to manage a Scepter or a Sheep-hook, according to God's Pleaſure. If we can deny our ſelves, we ſhall humbly yield to God. If we can ſincerely ſay, *Not our Wills*, we ſhall

Pœnam dè adverſis mundi ille ſentit, cui lætitia & gloria omnis in mundo eſt Cyp. ad Demet.

Pſal. 131.

readily repeat our Saviour's Submiſſion, *But thy Will be done.*

Direct. 4. A prudent forecaſt of poſſible Evils as future to us, arms us with Patience to ſuſtain them. Since Man was expell'd from the Terreſtrial Paradiſe, and is below the Celeſtial, he is liable to innumerable afflicting Accidents. His condition here is like an open Sea, ſo voluble and inconſtant, ſo violent and furious: Sometimes the Ships are raiſed upon the top of the Waves, as if they ſailed in the Air; and ſometimes plunged into the Waters, and ready to be ſwallowed up: Such frequent changes happen in our paſſage to Eternity, and it is mercifully ordered ſo by the Divine Wiſdom, that we may ſo uſe the World, as not to abuſe it and our ſelves, by overvaluing and affecting it. It is a Contemplation of *Theodoret*, that the *Sun* and *Moon*, the moſt glorious Luminaries of Heaven, and ſo beneficial to the Earth, would be honoured as Deities, if they always appeared with the ſame invariable tenour of Light: And therefore God wiſely diſpoſed of their Motions, that at

at the revolution of certain Periods they ſhould ſuffer an Eclypſe, that the ignorant world might be convinced they were but parts of Nature, appointed for the ſervice of Man, and are not worthy of Divine Honour. Thus we ſee, that often the brighteſt and fulleſt Proſperity is eclypſed, to convince us by the miſerable Changes in this world, that the beſt eſtate of Man is altogether Vanity, and that theſe things are utterly inſufficient to make us happy, and are not worthy of the chief regard and affection of our immortal Souls. To ſet our hearts on them, is to build on the Sand, and to expoſe our ſelves to ruinous Falls by every Storm. A ſudden Blaſt overthrows the Fabrick of Fancy, our conceited Happineſs in the enjoyment of periſhing things. Our greateſt Comforts may occaſion our greateſt Afflictions: *The Glory of a Family may occaſion the Grief of it.* Now the conſideration of the mutable nature of things here below, keeps the heart looſe from them, fortifies us with proper Thoughts to bear evils that happen, and prevents diſappointments, that is an aggravating circumſtance of

our troubles, and a great vexation to the Mind. The *Iſraelites* when tranſported from the Land of *Canaan* to *Babylon*, felt the rigors of their Captivity the more ſenſibly, in that they were confident in their term and ſtate in that Land, as their permanent Inheritance: To be expelled from ſo rich a Country wherein they promiſed themſelves Reſt, was a high degree of their Miſery.

There is indeed a pre-viſion of Evils that may befal us, that has Torment, that anticipates and exaſperates Miſery. *Fear*, that gives the Signal of approaching Evils, often brings more terror than caution, and like a timerous *Centinel* by a falſe Alarm, aſtoniſhes rather than prepares the Mind to encounter with danger. Our Saviour ſtrictly forbids ſuch perplexing apprehenſions of future evils, as moſt unbecoming Chriſtians, who are under the perpetual Providence of their Heavenly Father.

Mat. 6. 34. *Take no thought for the morrow, the morrow ſhall take thought for the things of it ſelf.* But on the contrary, to be ſecure in our Proſperity, as if we ſhould always enjoy a favourable courſe of things,

things, as if our moſt flouriſhing Comforts did not ſpring from an earthly Original, and might be ſuddenly blaſted, or eaſily cut down, is to lay our ſelves open to ſurprizing Diſorders and Perplexities, when Evils befal us. 'Tis the wiſe Counſel of St. *Peter* to Believers, *Think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as if ſome ſtrange thing happen'd to you:* For unexpected Adverſity falls upon the Soul in its full weight, and ſuddenly overthrows it. Uncomfortable Accidents ſtrike to the heart, when 'tis not arm'd to receive the Blow: Whereas the remembrance of our frail and fickle ſtate, makes us leſs troubled in afflictive Changes, becauſe prepared for what may happen to us. 1 Pet. 4. 12.

Direct. 5. Serious and mournful Reflections upon our Guilt, and what we deſerve from Divine Juſtice, is both a *Motive* and a *Means* to ſuppreſs Impatience and Indignation, and to allay inordinate grief in our Sufferings. We are directed by the wiſe Preacher, *In the day of adverſity conſider:* It is a proper ſeaſon to review Conſcience, *to*

ſearch and try our ways, to take a ſad and ſerious examination of our Lives. If God ſhould exact the rigid ſcore of our Debts, and make us as miſerable as we are ſinful, yet there is the greateſt reaſon to juſtify him, and accuſe our ſelves; much more when our *Puniſhment* is far below our *Deſerts*.

Humility is the Mother of Meekneſs, they are Graces of the ſame Complexion and Features. Our Saviour in the order of the Beatitudes, firſt declared, *Bleſſed are the poor in Spirit*, that have a low conceit of themſelves, as nothing in Spirituals, and worſe than nothing in Sin; as empty of all that is holy and good, and compounded of all evil: And *Bleſſed are thoſe that mourn*, in a ſenſe of their ſins: And then, *Bleſſed are the meek:* And theſe are very congruouſly joined, for Meekneſs is a Diſpoſition inſeparable from the other. He that duly conſiders himſelf to be a wretched Creature, a worthleſs Rebel, and is humbly and ſorrowfully affected for his unworthineſs, his Paſſions will be ſubdued; and as melted Metal receives any form, ſo he patiently ſuffers what God inflicts. A *broken heart*

heart is an *acceptable ſacrifice* to God, and implies a tender ſenſe of Sin, as the Offence and Diſhonour of the holy and gracious God, in alluſion to a broken Bone, that has an exquiſite ſenſe of any hurt: And it may be extended to ſignify a Heart that is compliant and ſubmiſſive to God's Will, in alluſion to a Horſe that is broken, and eaſily managed by the Reins of the Rider. Contrition for Sin is always joined with Reſignation to the chaſtiſing Providence of God. Pſal 51.

Beſides, Godly Sorrow will leſſen Natural Sorrow. Sin firſt deſerves our Grief, and the ſharpeſt accents of our Lamentation ſhould be placed upon it; and the more ſenſible we are of it, the lighter will Affliction be to us. As the opening a Vein ſtops by Revulſion, a Flux of Blood in another part; ſo the turning the Stream of Sorrow from Affliction to Sin, is a powerful means to make it ceaſe: There is Health in the bitterneſs of Phyſick, and Joy in the depth of this Sadneſs. Briefly, Repentance inclines the Heart of God, and opens his tender compaſſions to the afflicted. We have an admirable Exam-

Example of this in the case of afflicted *Ephraim:* Upon his Penitential Complaint, the expression of his Grief and Shame for his Sin, God graciously
Jer. 31.20. answers, *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: Therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord.* When the relenting Sinner is covered with Tears, the great Comforter descends, and brings healing to the troubled Waters: This advice is more necessary for the afflicted, because usually the strokes of Providence are properly a Reproof and Correction for Sin; the application of a Corrosive implies that some corrupt matter is to be discharged: God is provoked by their neglects, and though Love cannot hate, it may be angry; and without renewing their Repentance, and recovering his Favour, their Afflictions are very uncomfortable. 'Tis extreamly sad to feel the sting of a guilty Conscience within, and the Displeasure of God without. The Burthen is heavy and oppressing, that is laid upon a wounded Back. It is therefore our

our beſt Wiſdom and Duty, *to ſearch our hearts and try our ways*, that we may diſcover what is the procuring cauſe of our troubles, *and turn unfeignedly to the Lord.* This will endear afflicted Souls to God, and incline him to afford gracious ſupports to them. It is true, ſometimes our ſufferings are deſigned for Trial, eſpecially when they are for Righteouſneſs ſake. Counterfeit Coin, though with a fair Stamp and Inſcription, is diſcovered by the Fire; thus meer titular Chriſtians, ſpecious Hypocrites, are made known by Perſecutions: But true ſubſtantial Gold endures the Fire without loſs, and the more 'tis tried, the more 'tis refined. Thus the true Chriſtian, whom neither the gain of the World, nor the loſs of Life can remove from the ſtedfaſt owning of the holy Truth, has a clear manifeſtation of his Sincerity. And it is a peculiar favour and honour, when God calls forth his Servants to the hardeſt Trials for his Name's ſake; 'tis the nobleſt way of Service, a ſpecial Conformity to the Son of God, more glorious than the reſembling his Power in doing Miracles. In this the Saints here

here have a capacity of ſerving God above the Angels; for the Obedience of the Angels is always joined with their Happineſs, but the Obedience of the Saints here, is often attended with Adverſity, and is more valuable to them upon that account: As a Soldier of Courage and Generoſity, when he is choſen from the reſt of the Army for ſome bold Exploit, values the Choice of the General, as a ſignal mark of the eſteem of his Valour and Fidelity. *To you it is given, not only to believe, but to ſuffer for Chriſt's ſake.* This is juſt matter of Joy. Innocence, with the faithful Companion of it, a good Conſcience, makes our Sufferings from the rage and violence of men, to be comfortable. There may be a Feaſt within the Houſe, when a Storm of Hail rattles upon the Tiles. But it is ſometimes ſo ordered by Divine Providence, that the evils we ſuffer are of a mixt nature, partly Chaſtiſements, and partly Trials. This was the caſe of the Believing *Hebrews*, to whom the Apoſtle directs his Counſel; their Perſecution was from the unrighteous Pagans, for a Cauſe purely Religious; but 'twas per-

Heb. 12.

permitted by the Righteous God, as a Puniſhment for their ſins. And here the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs is admirable, that the ſame Affliction is inſtrumental for the purifying of his Servants from ſin, and the advancement of his glorious Goſpel. The firſt and moſt immediate effect of his Diſcipline, is the humbling and ſanctifying them, to prepare them for his Love, by which they are fortified to bear courageouſly the worſt Evils for his ſake.

Direct. 6. Apply the Mind to conſider the Bleſſings we receive, as well as the Evils we endure. Whilſt the intenſe Thoughts are fixt upon the Croſs, the Soul is rackt with inward Tortures, but did we turn our eyes upon our Enjoyments, and the Comforts that are interwoven with our Troubles, it would be a means not only to compoſe us to Patience but Thankfulneſs. The Apoſtle directs us *to truſt in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy.* In the pooreſt and loweſt ſtate of Life, we have many favours and effects of his rich Bounty; and it is the ignorance of our deſervings and of our enjoyments, that

1 Tim. 6. 17.

that cauſeth diſcontent and murmuring under our troubles. Particularly, this Conſideration will be effectual to repreſs the Diſcontent that is apt to kindle in our Breaſts, upon the ſight of the different Diſpenſations of Providence; that ſome are exempted from the current Adverſities of the world, and live in eaſe and pleaſure, whilſt we are deprived of many outward Comforts. Suppoſe a ſick perſon in extream Poverty, were received by a rich and liberal Lord into his Houſe, and convenient Food, and precious Medicines were provided for him, without his deſert, or poſſibility of retribution; would he be ſo fooliſh and inſolent, as to complain of unkind and unworthy uſage, becauſe ſome others in the Family have a more plentiful Table and richer Habit allowed them? On the contrary, let us look down to thoſe who are below us: How many are poor and miſerable in the want of all things needful for the ſupport of Life? How many are under tormenting pains, or in deſperate ſadneſs, and have no taſte and comfort in their abundance? How many are fallen into deep Miſery, and

that

that aggravated by the afflicting Memory of former Happineſs? How many are ſurrounded by their cruel Enemies, and ſee no refuge, no ſanctuary for their eſcape, but a neceſſity of periſhing? And can we pretend a better title to the Mercies of God, than our Fellow-Worms? Our Original is from nothing, and our Works are ſinful: That we are not ſo deſolately miſerable as others, when equally guilty, is from the rich goodneſs of God, and ſhould make us thankful.

Add further; Let the moſt afflicted Saint in the world compare his Condition with that of the moſt proſperous wicked Perſons, and the compariſon will be effectual to endear God to him, and quiet his Paſſions under ſufferings.

The good things of this world in their abundance, variety, and excellence, cannot make a Sinner truly happy: the Miſeries of this Life in all kinds and degrees, cannot make a good Man utterly miſerable; nay, they are ineſtimably more happy in their ſufferings, than the Wicked in their proſperity. *Manna* rains from Heaven while they are in the Wilderneſs; ſupports

and

and comforts are from the Love of God ſhed abroad in their hearts; and their preſent Afflictions are a ſeed of Eternal Joy, to qualify and prepare them for the Joy of Heaven. Our Saviour, from whoſe Judgment we receive the true Weights and Meaſures of things, to regulate our Eſteem and Affections, declares his Diſciples, when under the ſharpeſt Perſecutions of the tongues or hands of their Enemies, under Diſgrace, Calumnies, Tortures and Death, even then he declares them *Bleſſed, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them*; and Heaven is ſuch a tranſcendent Bleſſedneſs, that the lively Hope of it, as the Reward and End of our Afflictions, makes us bleſſed here: And the moſt proſperous ſinners are by the ſame infallible rule, miſerable here; for the irreſiſtible, irremediable Miſery that is ordain'd and prepar'd for them in Hell, they would deceive themſelves with the Paintings of Happineſs, with an airy imaginary happineſs: Whilſt the Senſes are filled, the Soul is empty: But they ſhall not long enjoy the eaſe of their ignorance and ſecurity; the World can do no more to make them happy,

happy, than if one ſhould compound and temper a draught, and give it to the Poor and Miſerable, that induces Sleep and pleaſant Dreams for a few hours, but when they awake they are ſtill poor and miſerable. Our Saviour pronounceth a Woe to the rich and full, *to thoſe that laugh now, for they ſhall weep and mourn:* Their falſe deceitful Felicity, will end in real Miſery. It is * St. *Auſtin*'s Queſtion, Who would not preſer Grief with a ſober Mind, before the Jollity of a Phrenzy? Who would be a Merry Madman? for he is only happy in his Fancy, and fancies himſelf ſo, only becauſe he is diſtracted: And according to the Rules of true Wiſdom, the worſt eſtate of a Saint, when lamenting and languiſhing under Troubles, is more eligible than the beſt eſtate of a Sinner, when triumphing in Proſperity.

* *Si duo iſta proponantur ridere vis aut flere? Quis eſt qui reſpondeat niſi videre? ſed tantum prævalet invictiſſima veritas ut eligat homo ſanâ mente flere, quam mente alienata videre.* Auguſt. *Tract. de Epiſt.*

Direct. 7. Laſtly, Frequent and fervent Prayer to the *Father of mercies, and God of all conſolation*, is a bleſſed Means to ſupport the Spirit, and make it humble and obedient to the afflicting

Providence of God. 'Tis Divine Counſel, *Is any afflicted, let him pray.* 'Tis Prayer opens the Heart, and carnal Grief breathes out; Prayer opens Heaven, and Divine Joy flows into the Soul; the King of Glory keeps no State, there is always eaſy Acceſs to his Throne, and his Ears are always open to his humble Suppliants. His moſt gracious Nature inclines him to ſuſtain us in our dejections. We have a powerful Plea from his Compaſſions to encourage our Prayers in great Troubles. *He will regard the Prayer of the deſtitute, and not deſpiſe their Prayer.* The moſt glorious Attribute of the Spirit, *the Comforter*, is moſt uſeful and beneficial to afflicted Suppliants: Affliction is the Seaſon, and Prayer the Sphere of his Activity. That our Prayers may prevail, theſe following Rules muſt be obſerved.

1. They muſt be addreſſed with an humble Truſt on the Mercies of God, that incline him to relieve and ſuſtain
Jam. 1. 6. the afflicted. Thus St. *James* directs the afflicted, *to ask in faith, nothing wavering.* We read in Scripture of his Bowels,

Bowels, the light of his Countenance, his melting Eye, the ſoft, ſerene, compaſſionate Expreſſes of his moſt gracious Nature towards his ſuffering People. He doth not eſteem himſelf more honoured with the glorious Titles of our Creator and King, than with the amiable endearing Name of our Father; and with a Confidence becoming that Relation, we are directed by his Divine Son to make our Requeſts to him. 'Tis recorded of *Auguſtus* the Emperor, That when one preſented a Petition to him in a timerous and ſhy manner, that Generous Prince, whoſe Humanity was equal to his Dignity, was moved with diſpleaſure, as if it had been a tacit Reproach that he was of an untractable fierce Nature. Thus 'tis a diſparagement of God's Benignity and Clemency, when we pray to him in a diffident manner: He is more pleaſed in doing of us good, than we can be in receiving it. Indeed, if the Promiſes of God did not encourage our Hopes, we ſhould not preſume ſo much of his Affection, as to lay the burthen of our Cares and Sorrows on his Arms; but Heaven is not fuller of

Videris obolum porrigere elephanti. Macrob.

Stars to enlighten the darkneſs of the Night, than the Scripture is of precious Promiſes for the refreſhing the diſconſolate. When the Church com-
Iſa. 49. 14, 15, 16. plained, *The Lord hath forſaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me*; What aſſurance does he give of his moſt tender and unchangeable Love to her; *Can a woman forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands:* If he cannot forget himſelf, he cannot forget his People. 'Tis his dear Title,
2 Cor. 7. *God that comforts thoſe who are caſt down.*

Add to this, the Intereſt of the Saints in Jeſus Chriſt, who ever lives to make Interceſſion for them. None is more tenderly inclined to Mercy, than he that has ſuffered Miſery: And he felt our Sorrows, that he might afford relief and ſuccour to us. Whilſt our Saviour was upon the Earth, and was followed by a multitude of diſeaſed miſerable Perſons, Virtue went out of him, and healed them all: And ſince his Aſcent to Heaven, has he withdrawn

drawn that univerſal healing Virtue, and left us under irremediable and unmitigable Sorrows? Did his compaſſionate Eye regard all that were afflicted, and are we now out of his ſight? Then ſuch was his indulgent Humility, that although he could have performed the Cure by a Word, yet he readily offered to attend a ſick Servant; *I will come and heal him:* And now he is raiſed from his humble ſtate on Earth to the Throne of Heaven, does he diſdain to extend his merciful Hand for our Relief? No, his Heart and Love is the ſame in Heaven as upon the Earth. 'Tis true, he is exempted from all paſſionate Frailties, all afflicting Affections that are inconſiſtent with the Felicity and Glory of his Kingdom: But he ſtill retains the ſame ſolid Love, the ſame Godlike Compaſſion, the ſame ready Will to ſupport and deliver his People in Miſery. Nay, if the change of his ſtate could have made any in him, it could be no other than what is recorded to the immortal Honour of *Veſpaſian*, by one that had experience of his Royal Bounty; That the raiſing him to the Imperial Throne made

Nec quicquam in te mutavit fortunæ amplitudo, niſi ut proderſſe tantundem poſſes & velles. Plin.

no alteration in his Breaſt, but that his Power was enlarged equal to his Will of doing good. Our Saviour in his exaltation at the Right Hand of God, has all Power, equal to his Infinite Love, that is ſuitable to the permanent Relation between him and the Saints: He is their Head, and they his Members: And was there ever ſuch a Miracle, or rather Monſter in Nature, that the Head the moſt eminent part, the Seat of all the Senſes, did not reſent a Wound made in the Foot, the loweſt and moſt ſervile part of the Body? Does it not preſently expreſs its real Complaints? For the natural union of the parts communicates the ſenſe of the pain ſuffered by any to the whole. And ſuch is the ſpiritual Union between the Divine Head and his Members, that from Heaven he rebuk'd the cruel Perſecutor of the Saints, in Language expreſſing the Union of Charity between himſelf and them, *Saul, Why perſecuteſt thou me?* He does not ſay, Why perſecuteſt thou my Saints, why my Servants, but *Why me?* Though he is not capable of any ſorrowful ſenſe, yet his Affections are quick and vigorous to his People. If it were

Non dicit quid ſanctos meos, quid ſervos meos, ſed quid me perſequeris? Aug.

were poſſible that his Joy, wherewith he is infinitely bleſſed, ſhould be increas'd, it would be in the Effuſions of his Goodneſs to afflicted Chriſtians. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* How heavy ſoever the Calamities are, let them not ſink our Spirits into Deſpair, but raiſe them to nearer approaches to the God of Conſolation.

2. The Prayers of the afflicted muſt be always with ſubmiſſive deference to the Will and Wiſdom of God, as to the manner, the degrees, and time of his delivering them. Afflictions are not peremptory and immutable Diſpenſations, but conditional, for holy and good Ends, and we may humbly pray for their removal. 'Tis no reſiſting of Providence, to addreſs to the Divine Majeſty with frequent and fervent Requeſts, That he would pleaſe to take his chaſtiſing Hand off from us Upon *David*'s humble Prayer, the deſtroying Angel was commanded to ceaſe; in the midſt of Judgment Mercy interpoſed, *It is enough.* But we are apt to be impatient in our Troubles, and by haſty

impetuous desires of Ease and Deliverance, disturb our Tranquility, and offend God. As those who are diseased with a Rheumatism, being worse in the Night than the Day, impatiently long for the rising Sun to dispel the oppressing Humours, and cheer their Spirits: So in our Afflictions we impatiently renew our Requests, *Lord, how long? Lord, make haste*; not reposing our selves on his Wisdom and Goodness, who will do what is best for us. God is both our Father and Physician, and when the corrupt Humours are purged away, will give Cordials and Restoratives to his afflicted Children. The Prophet tells us, *He that believes, makes not haste*; he doth not by undue means seek to remedy his Evils, nor passionately and unquietly sollicit the accomplishment of the Promises, before the season appointed by the Divine Decree, for that is to desire that his Mercy should be displayed to the prejudice of his Immutability; but humbly waits God's Pleasure.

3. Let the main desires of the afflicted be for Divine Grace, (which is never more necessary and useful than

in

in Troubles) that they may glorify God, and obtain their eminent End, the Salvation of their Souls by them. We are often very ardent in our Prayers for trivial things, neglecting the moſt neceſſary and important. As if a Priſoner loaden with Irons ſhould paſſionately intreat, that his Chains ſhould be gilded, not looſed. How many ſpend their zealons Affections in praying for temporal things, wherein their Happineſs does not conſiſt. One of the reaſons why God heaps upon rebellious Sinners the good things of this Life, is to inſtruct us how deſpicable they are in his account, things to be thrown away, as he ſeems to do. And he often refuſes the Petitions of his Servants concerning temporal things. When *Pelopidus* interceded with *Epaminondas* the wiſe Governor of the *Thebans*, for the Freedom of a baſe Fellow that for ſome Crime was committed to Priſon, he denied his Requeſt; and preſently releaſed him upon the deſire of a vile Harlot: And gave this reaſon, It was a Favour not worthy the Dignity of *Pelopidas*, but ſuitable to the Quality of ſuch a Petitioner.

Non audit Deus niſi quod dignum ducit ſuis beneficiis. Arab.

And

And ſometimes we pray for things dangerous and hurtful to our Souls; and 'tis becoming the Providence and Love of our Heavenly Father, to deny our ill-counſel'd deſires. Let us therefore be more intent and importunate in our Petitions, that our Afflictions may be ſanctified, than removed. We have neither Underſtanding nor Strength, how to order our ſelves, how to bear and improve great Afflictions. St. *Paul* declares, *I have learn'd in every condition to be content*. By the Revelation of the Goſpel, and the Holy Spirit's teaching that all his Earthly Troubles ſhould end in the Heavenly Glory, he was inſtructed in that Science of the Saints. We are therefore directed, *If any man want* Jam. 1. *wiſdom*, that is, how to manage himſelf patiently under Afflictions, *let him ask it of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not*. If Afflictions are ſore and ſudden, it is very hard to compoſe and ſupport the Spirit. The Paſſions are Servants of Senſe, rather than obedient to Reaſon, and by their firſt violent Motions ſurprize the Mind, and overcome it before it perceives the Aſſault; he that is not a Maſter, is a Slave

Slave to them. Or ſuppoſe no angry Reſiſtance, no impetuous Paſſions in the afflicted Breaſt, yet the Heart bleeds inwardly, and faints away. *David* had natural Courage to encounter a Lion, yet he was ſo diſconſolate in his Troubles, that he was fain to argue againſt his Sadneſs; *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? why art thou diſquieted within me?* And having raiſed his drooping Spirits, yet he relapſed to his firſt Faintneſs, till by ſupplies from God he was confirmed in hope of Deliverance. The Apoſtle implores the glorious Power of God, that the *Coloſſians* might be *ſtrengthned with all might, unto all patience, and long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs.* We ſhould ſink under heavy Sufferings, or be tired with the length of Miſeries, without his immortal Strength. But if the Power of God aſſiſt a weak Spirit, it will be finally victorious over all the Evils of the World. How many Martyrs of the Tender Sex, who would naturally tremble at a drawn Sword, yet by Divine Support deſpiſed the Tormentors, and all the Inſtruments of Cruelty. In them was an imitation of that Miracle

Pſal. 42.

Col. 1.

of

of Divine Power, when the Three Children walked in the midſt of the flaming Furnace, untouch'd by the Fire. God is ſtiled *the God of patience and conſolation.* It is his ſole Prerogative to comfort the afflicted: *I, even I, am he that comforts you.* The Woman in the Goſpel that had a bloody Iſſue, no human Art could afford her aid and relief: And when her Eſtate was waſted on the Phyſicians, and her Strength by her Diſeaſe, ſhe came to our Saviour, and by touching the Hem of his Garment was preſently healed. Thus the afflicted Spirit, whom no worldly things are able to ſupport and make joyful, finds everlaſting Comfort in God. He ſatisfies the Soul with his Love, and eſtabliſhes this Perſuaſion, *That all things ſhall turn for the beſt to his people.* Now by Prayer the Divine Power and Favour is engaged for our ſupport and deliverance. How many Pſalms of *David* begin in Tears, and end in Triumph? In his great Exigency, when ready to be ſwallowed up by his Enemies, he diſpatch'd a flying Prayer to Heaven for relief; *Lord, take hold of ſhield and buckler, and ſtand up*

up for my help: And the Almighty appeared in Arms for his Reſcue. And he recounts another bleſſed Experience of the Efficacy of Prayer; *In the day when I cried, thou anſweredſt me; and ſtrengtheneſt me with ſtrength in my ſoul.* Pſal. 138. The Affliction was ſtill incumbent, but did not overwhelm him; which was a more gracious teſtimony of God's love, than if it had merely been taken away. It is ſaid of the diſtreſſed, *They looked to him, and were lightned.* Pſal. 34. 5. It is the Perfection and Propriety of the Saints in Heaven to ſee the glorious Face of God without Veil or Shadow; but here ſome Rays of his quickning Countenance comfort his afflicted Servants, while they lift up their Eyes and Hearts to his Sanctuary; a joyful Light breaks forth, that leads them out of the dark Labyrinth of their troubled Thoughts. If the Saints remain diſconſolate, it is not for want of Mercy and Power in God to refreſh their Sorrows, but from neglecting to improve their Intereſt in him, and deriving ſpiritual Comforts from his fulneſs, by humble believing Prayer. When the Diſciples were ſurprized with a ſtorm in

in the Sea of *Tiberias*, they toil'd with hard labour to ſave the Ship, that was like to be overwhelmed by the Waves; but all in vain, till by their Cries they waked our Saviour, who was aſleep in the Ship. *He lifts up his head, and the proud waves preſently ſink; he ſpeaks a word of command, and the boiſterous winds are ſilent; and a great tempeſt is changed into a great calm.* This may fitly repreſent the afflicted ſtate of a Chriſtian, their Paſſions ſwell into a ſtorm, they are ready to be overwhelm'd with Troubles, but 'tis becauſe Chriſt ſleeps in them; they have his Preſence as if they had it not; but earneſt conſtant Prayer will awake him, and his propitious Preſence will ſecure them from ſhipwrack, and make their Breaſts the true Pacifick Sea, and bring them ſafely to the Bleſſed Eternal Shore.

Simon dormiret in te Chriſtus, tempeſtates iſtas non pateris. Ideo fluctuabat Navis quia Chriſtus dormiebat. Navis tua cor tuum. Aug.

Briefly; God teaches us to profit by our Afflictions, and this affords matter of Joy and Thankſgiving. The *Pſalmiſt* declares, *Bleſſed is the man whom thou chaſteneſt, and inſtructeſt out of thy law.* The Divine Teacher gives a right underſtanding of Sufferings,

ings, for what end they are ſent, and teacheth by the voice of the Rod to obey his Word. He inſtructs us in our Duty with the cleareſt Convictions, and infuſeth gracious diſpoſitions ſuitable to his Doctrine. He gives directing Light, and a ſeeing Eye to perceive it; he preſents Heavenly Encouragements, and prepares the Heart to receive them. Now what *Paul* ſpeaks of the Croſs of Chriſt, is applicable to the Croſſes of the Saints: *God forbid that I ſhould glory but in the croſs of Chriſt, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to it.* The Croſs of Chriſt made the Jews and Pagans to deſpiſe and reject the Goſpel, eſteeming it to be groſs folly to expect a glorious Immortal Life, from one who was ignominiouſly put to Death; yet that was the great Argument of the Apoſtle's triumphant Joy, becauſe he felt the Virtue of it to unbind the Charms of the World, ſo admired by carnal Eyes. He looked upon it with the ſame diſaffection and diſregard, as one that is near expiring; it appeared in his eyes rather as a loathſome Object, than with amiable qualities.

And

And if the Croſs of a Chriſtian be the means of internal Mortification, if thereby this vain deceiving World be render'd contemptible to him, and his Affections are inflamed to things above, he will find cauſe to glory in Tribulation. To conclude this Argument:

There is no Affliction how great ſoever, though with reſpect to natural means unremovable and unmitigable, yet if it be ſanctified by Divine Grace, a Chriſtian even while he is ſo afflicted, has more cauſe of Joy than Grief, more reaſon to bleſs God for it, than to repine and complain. *In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Chriſt Jeſus concerning you.* He turns Afflictions into Benefits, and our affectionate Praiſes are due upon that account.

1 Theſ. 1. 5.

O

FINIS.